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more performance

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UK'S MOST
IN-DEPTH
BIKE TESTS



TRAINING

LAURA TROTT

The Olympic hero on her
world-beating ambitions

FITNESS

INJURY-PROOF YOUR BODY P.45

GEAR

STOP THIEF!

How to keep the bike
burglars at bay

SMASH YOUR NEXT SPORTIVE

The essential kit, training tips and
nutrition advice you need to succeed

TESTED CAR RACKS / ELECTRONIC GEARS / WORKSTANDS / SADDLES



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AUTHORISED
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Featured bike: Evo HI-MOD Dura Ace was £3,499.99 - Now £2,974.99 SRP
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Racing is in Cannondale's DNA and even though you might not compete on the circuit, we know that every ride is a race: against your limits, against your riding buddies and of course, against Strava.

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"Great acceleration, effortless climbing and all-day comfort make this the best conventional road bike we've ridden" - **BIKE RADAR** ★★★★★

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BikesEtc

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STAFF PICKS

SOME OF OUR FAVOURITE PRODUCTS IN THIS MONTH'S ISSUE

**GIRO SUTTON
HELMET**

PAGE 52

Reflective piping and LED lights may well be the urban rider's night-time visibility options of choice but with Giro's particularly colourful Sutton helmet you'll be seen during the day too. To paraphrase, the future of bike lids is bright, the future is very, very orange. *Wesley Doyle*

**GARMIN
VIVOACTIVE**

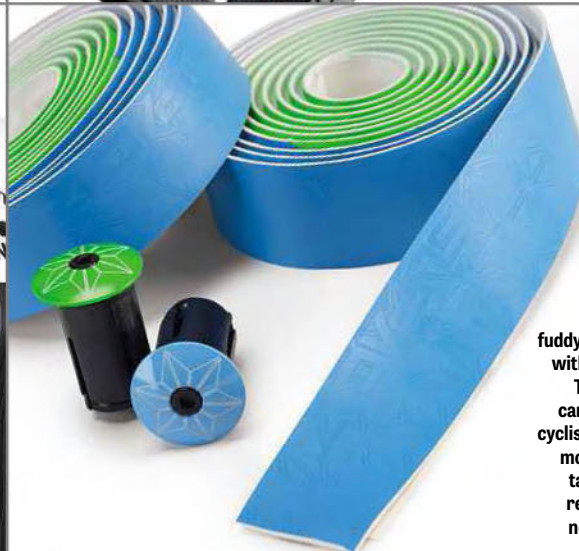
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I had a bit of success using the MyFitnessPal app recently to get down to a decent racing weight, and it made me a lot more open to the idea of fitness tracking, counting steps and measuring energy expenditure. The Vivoactive does all that, and doesn't look too nerdy either. *Andy Waterman*

**TREK
FACTORY
RACING
TEAM KIT**

PAGE 76

Wearing pro team kit feels a bit like being the kid in the supermarket who's insisted on wearing his Spider-Man outfit to do the shopping. They're probably having a great time though, just like I did while dressing up like my heroes to find which pro tour outfit has the best clobber. *Joseph Delves*

**SUPACAZ
KUSH
BAR TAPE**

PAGE 19

Just as a few fuddy-duddies stuck with black & white TV when colour came along, some cyclists still insist on monochrome bar tape. Me? I can't resist a splash of neon on my bike. *David Kenning*



ED'S LETTER

How often do you ride? It's a question I'm asked often – especially when people find out what I do for a living – to which I answer, 'A fair bit.' I ride to work to avoid public transport while ensuring I get a daily bit of exercise. At weekends, I try to head out for a long ride with friends. During the season, I take part in half a dozen or so sportives. In an ideal world, I'll fit in a trip abroad to tick one of the classic climbs off my list. But, of course, there's work and family life to add to the mix.

However many hours you can dedicate to riding, I'm confident there's something for you in this issue. In addition to our in-depth bike, gear and garment reviews, we speak to Olympian Laura Trott about how she turned her hobby into a gold medal-winning career (p38). For those who fancy emulating the pro experience, we tell you how

Madison-Genesis spend their time at their training camp in Majorca (p58). And for those who are a bit more relaxed about their riding, we have a look at the best casual cycling clobber on the market (p52).

We've had lots of requests from you for more ride locations and event suggestions. So, this issue, we debut our Out There section (p122), a monthly guide to routes, races and reasons to ride. Looking at all the different sportives and amazing places in the UK to go riding, it made me think about my answer to the 'how often do you ride?' question. The next time I'm asked, I think I'll just answer, 'As much as I can.' Something I imagine goes for most of you, too.

Wesley Doyle, Editor

'I ride to work to avoid public transport while ensuring I get a daily bit of exercise'

BMC
SWITZERLAND 

granfondo GF02

Turning every ride into a Classic

Vertical compliance, stable handling, immediate power transfer and dependability are necessary factors to succeed in the northern races but they're also at the top of mere mortal's wishlists. Built for the Spring Classics, the same features that make the granfondo perfect for those races smooth out the road ahead of you – no matter where, or how long you're riding.



HOW WE TEST

The UK's most in-depth bike tests

▶ The *BikesEtc* team are a varied bunch, and that's reflected in the type of riding we do too. We all commute by bike, daily distances varying from 10 to 26 miles, and our extracurricular cycling activities go from regular sportive riding, to time trialling and club-level racing, to frankly insane audaxing. What unites the team, though, is their love of all things two-wheeled, which gives *BikesEtc* a good spread of experience when it comes to testing bikes, gadgets and garments.

When it comes to buying new cycling kit, making the right decision is equally important whether you're

spending £10 on a pair of socks or several thousand on a whole new bike, and the way we test reflects that. We use an extensive set of criteria, including performance, ease of use, range of features, build quality and value for money. Before we even begin testing, we put our minds to coming up with the best way to test every product, whether that means building a special rig to test pump pressure or standing in a pitch-black country lane in the middle of the night to measure lighting beam patterns.

We go the extra mile to find out if the products will be right for you, whatever your cycling style.

THE RATINGS

For each group test, we score the products based on a comprehensive range of criteria. There isn't space to give a full breakdown of the scoring, but we highlight the most important and relevant features so you can see in which areas each product performs especially well, and where its weak spots lie.

Giving extra weight to the most important features, we add up the ratings for each product and convert them into an overall score out of 10.



BEST VALUE

Winners of this award may not have the highest overall score in their group test, and may not be the cheapest, but they will always represent especially good performance for their price.



BEST IN TEST

The overall winner in each test. Scoring highly in all criteria, this will be an excellent all-rounder, often with an extra something – a touch of style, a special feature – that sets it apart.



GOLD AWARD

This award goes to bikes, kit or components with exceptional levels of performance and design. Don't expect to see it every issue – we only hand it out when it's truly deserved.

THE TESTERS



ANDY WATERMAN

Deputy Editor and holder of a sports science degree, Andy races on the road and off it in cyclocross, and it's his all-round expertise and rigorous approach to testing that makes *BikesEtc*'s bike tests the UK's most in-depth.



JOSEPH DELVES

His job title may be Staff Writer (and a very good one he is too), but Joe is more commonly known as 'The Fixer', his years on bike shop floors meaning what he doesn't know about bikes probably isn't worth knowing.



DAVID KENNING

Brompton commuter by day, intrepid audaxer by night (and day, and then night again), the number of hours David spends in the saddle would make most people weep. On the plus side, it means products get a thorough testing.

BikesEtc

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NEW BIKES
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LATEST TECH

Départ



PINNACLE ARKOSE 2

Affordable, rule-breaking
adventure road bike
that's a whole lot of fun

PRICE: £850

CONTACT: evanscycles.com

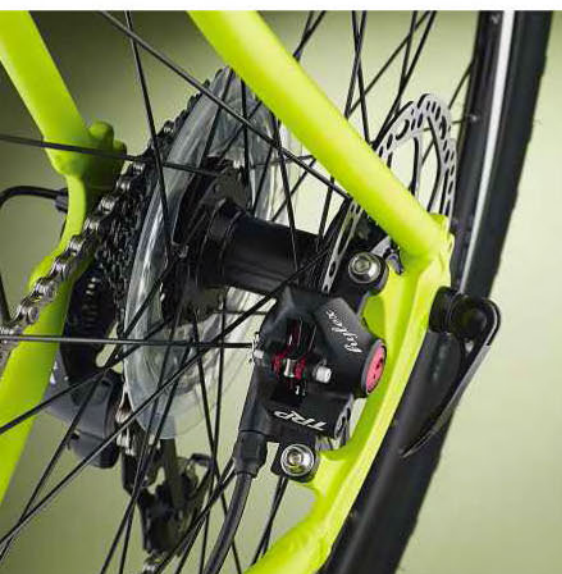


Q36.5 kit **p13** San Marco saddles **p14** Garmin Vivoactive **p14** Juin Tech R1 brakes **p15**
Focus Izalco Max **p16** BMC TeamMachine SLR03 **p17** Bar tape **p19** Bike sheds **p20**

They say cookie, we say biscuit. They say elevator, we say lift. They say gravel bike, we say, er, 'adventure road'? The arrival of what appears to be American-style gravel bikes on the British market has been regarded as suspicious by those who fear it's just another ruse by devious marketing departments. Gravel bikes were developed for America's vast network of unpaved roads that criss-cross its great, wide-open spaces. What use could overpopulated Britain have for such a machine? And anyway, aren't they just rebranded cyclocross bikes?

'There's a lot of crossover,' admits James Olsen, brand manager of Evans' Pinnacle marque. 'Anything you can do on an adventure road bike you can do on a cyclocross. Likewise, you could enter a gravel bike in a cross race.'

It's a frank admission seeing as Evans is a leading booster of the adventure road category, not least the Pinnacle Arkose range – designed by Olsen 'in a workshop in Hertfordshire' as



The 11-36 cassette and 38-tooth chainring gives a wide range of gears

the decal on the acid lime green frame notes.

The Arkose's aluminium frame and full carbon fork are the same across all models and keep the bike at around the 10kg mark, a fair bit lighter than the steel competition. This year's models see tyre clearance increased to 45mm and into the freakish but fun realm of 'monster cross' (home-built bikes that are a hybrid of cyclocross and MTB).

Britain's wealth of green lanes and drovers' roads means there's no shortage of places to explore on a bike like this. Only when climbing out of the saddle did the stock 40mm WTD Nano Comps feel a little squishy.

Though 1x drivetrains are increasingly common on mountain bikes, the Arkose was among the first drop bar bikes to feature one. The 11-36 sprocket and the 38-tooth chainring give a wide range of gears low enough for most hills, although a relatively low top gear of 38x11 may limit your top speed to some extent. Shifting is via a lone bar-end shifter, a device that'll either conjure up fond memories of the pre-STI era or leave you momentarily bewildered. Paired with the 1x drivetrain, a bar-end shifter is surprisingly effective, allowing large shifts across the entire gear

'Adventure' is a grand word for something far simpler: rediscovering the way we rode bikes as teenagers

range in a single action. We found ourselves shifting less often than on a STI-equipped road bike and instead made our legs do the work, as on a single-speed. A bike at this price is all about trade-offs, and the savings from the bar-end shifter pay for the TRP Hylex hydraulic disc brakes, which were a revelation. They provide outstanding power, precision and modulation and are more or less fit-and-forget.

'The whole point of a bike like this is that it should make you want to go further, to stay out longer,' says Olsen, who counts his earliest cycling memories as haring along country lanes on his BMX, darting into the woods for some off-road action before racing home to be back in time for tea. Though it does have some technologically advanced components, the Arkose 2 is really just a simple, versatile bike that's designed for grown-ups to rediscover the

carefree pleasure that comes from riding a bike anywhere and everywhere.

Ultra-endurance races such as the Tour Divide (tourdivide.org) and the Transcontinental Race (transcontinentalrace.com) showcase a variety of lightweight bikes with big tyres and have seen acts of human endeavour that hark back to the early, glorious era of road racing. But for most, 'adventure' is a rather grand word for something much more straightforward: rediscovering the way we rode bikes as teenagers, blissfully ignorant of the silo mentalities that divide one branch of cycling from another. Rather than carving out yet another unnecessary niche, the virtue of a bike like the Arkose 2 is that it invites us to free ourselves from the tyranny of genre. *Jack Thurston is the author of Lost Lanes: 36 Glorious Bike Rides In Southern England (£11.99, Wild Things Publishing Ltd)*

BikesEtc Rating

PROS

Great fun to ride on all terrain

CONS

Performance compromised on tarmac

OVERALL

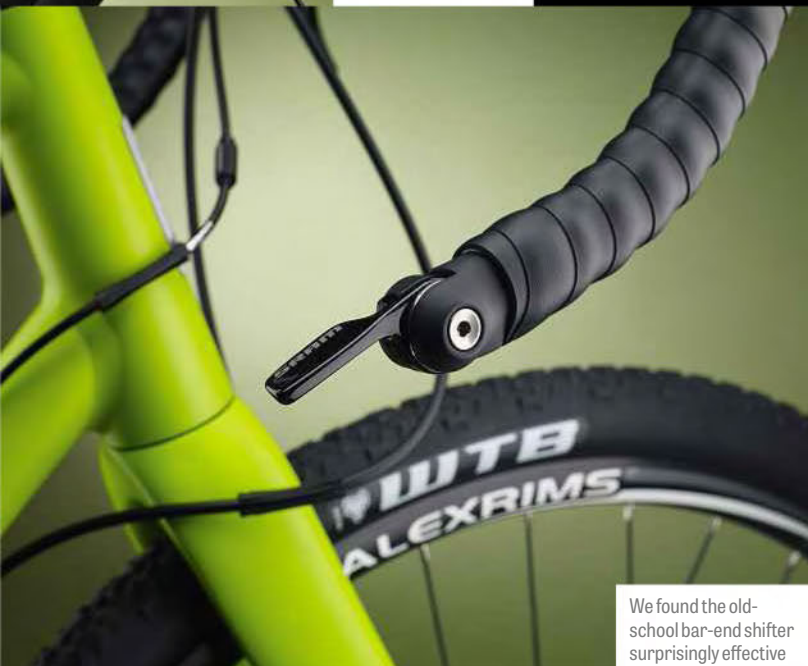
9
10

The TRP Hylex hydraulic disc brakes are a revelation



Frame: 6061-T6 heat-treated aluminium, triple-butt
Wheels: Alex ATD-490 32H rims, Joytech hubs
Tyres: WTB Nano Comp 40c
Shifter: SRAM SL-500
Rear mech: SRAM X7 Type 2
Chainset: Samox
Brakes: Tektro Hylex hydraulic disc
Weight: 10.2kg (medium)
Contact: evanscycles.com

Generous frame clearances allow tyres up to a massive 45mm



We found the old-school bar-end shifter surprisingly effective

Q36.5 JERSEY & BIBSHORTS

Smart, minimalist cycle clothing designed for the Dolomites

PRICE: L1 jersey £103 Vented bibshorts £149 **CONTACT:** q36-5.com

Thirty-six and a half degrees is the internal temperature of a healthy body. It's also the starting point for all of Luigi Bergamo's cycle clothing. A day spent in the Dolomites frequently sees riders experience hugely varied conditions, from slugging up mountains under a sweltering sun to barrelling down the other side into a frigid headwind. Something you'll be familiar with if you've watched the Giro from the safety of your

armchair. Keeping your body temperature stable across the largest range of temperatures is therefore crucial to performing at your best. Designed for the hottest weather, the L1 jersey is made of an almost barrier-like fabric that remains cool while working across a broad range of temperatures. The equally svelte Vented bibshort boasts dual-density padding, with increased breathability towards the front to help keep your junk from roasting even when the rest of you might be cooked. 🚴



SAN MARCO SADDLES

Don't get a bum deal – get your seat made to measure

PRICE: Concor Racing £120 (top), Aspidre Racing Open £120, Mantra Racing £120, Regale Racing £120 (bottom left to right)
CONTACT: sellesanmarco.it

Next time you plonk yourself on your bike, ask yourself, is your seat as comfortable as it could be? Saddle choice is a tricky decision. Not only do different saddles suit different physiologies and styles of riding, it only becomes obvious whether or not you've made the right choice a few hundred miles down the road. Luckily, most saddle manufacturers have a system to help.

San Marco's DiMA system takes into account age, sensitivity, body type and riding style to match you with the perfect saddle – shown here are the mid-level 'Racing' models from four of San Marco's five saddle ranges, each with its own distinctive shape and profile. Once they've come up with the prescription, you can borrow a saddle for extended testing from participating dealers, taking the financial sting out of choosing the wrong model, as well as the pain in the posterior.



GARMIN VIVOACTIVE

Stylish fitness tracker that thinks it's a smartwatch

PRICE: £200 **CONTACT:** garmin.com

In the space of a few years, wearable tracking devices have gone from instruments of court-mandated punishment to coveted lifestyle accessory. These limb-mounted widgets track your daily movements, monitoring everything from steps taken to hours slept, helping you keep on top of your fitness goals. At their most basic, they can be little more than glorified pedometers, while the most elaborate pack in GPS technology and heart rate monitors.

Keen to make its mark on the expanding smartwatch market, Garmin's Vivoactive blurs the distinction between the two categories. Not only will it track a range of different sports activities, it also syncs with your phone to beam texts and other notifications along with weather updates straight to your wrist. Its low-key design is smart enough for formal settings, its digital face giving little indication of its sporty nature.

Tracking your movements as you bumble through the day, at the press of a button it's ready to record a range of different sports or indoor workouts. There's no integrated heart rate monitor but it can connect via Bluetooth to a range of sensors, including speed, cadence or power meters on the bike. Data is then uploaded via your phone to the Garmin Connect app.

Great if you want to monitor your active lifestyle but beware – it'll also track how much time you spend sitting at home in front of the telly.





JUIN TECH R1 DISC BRAKES

Better disc braking without breaking the bank

PRICE: £150 (pair) **CONTACT:** edgesportsuk.com

Mechanical disc brakes are great, but hydraulic ones are even better. More powerful and consistent than purely cable-activated models, they give you more control over stopping your bike. The downside, as ever, is cost. This is largely because upgrading requires not only swapping the callipers but also the shifters, which could set you back £500 or more. But these hydraulic callipers from Juin could be the perfect solution, since they'll work with your existing mechanical shifters.

Hydraulic brakes require a fluid reservoir, which in full hydraulic systems from SRAM and Shimano is housed in the brake lever – it's what makes them so bulky. Here, the calliper itself is a sealed hydraulic unit, with the fluid reservoir piggybacking on the side of the brake. This isn't strictly a new idea but it's by far the neatest design we've seen.

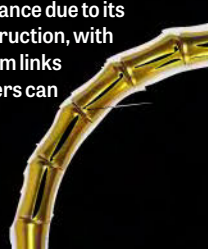
Set-up is straightforward, and the other big benefit of keeping all of the hydraulic functions in the calliper is that bleeding is a doddle, as there are no hoses to be flushed through. And since they use readily available Shimano

mineral oil and pads, picking up spares shouldn't be difficult either.

In use, power is almost on a par with fully hydraulic models, and streets ahead of mechanical designs. At 140g per calliper, they're lighter than the TRP Hy/Rd competition and come bundled with a pair of rotors, adaptors and mounting hardware. For once, we were pleasantly surprised by the price, which seems like keen value given their performance.

Jagwire Road Elite Link Brake Kit

PRICE: £55 **CONTACT:** wiggles.co.uk

This handsome cable set from Jagwire boosts braking performance due to its compression-less construction, with outers made of aluminium links – traditional flexible outers can sap power, leaving your brakes feeling woolly. Low-friction cables and liners will help keep the cables clean, too. 

Less



Fitbit Charge HR

£120, fitbit.com

Market leader Fitbit makes a wide range of trackers, but we'd spring for the pretty Charge HR with its built-in optical heart rate monitor.

More



Withings Activité

£320, withings.com

Proving fitness trackers don't have to be ugly, the Activité connects with an app to track sleep, steps and other activities.

Use your phone instead



myfitnesspal Free,

myfitnesspal.com

Using your phone to track steps, myfitnesspal lets you log activities and calories eaten to help you lose/gain weight, or just stay the same.



Frame: Focus Izalco Max Disc

Groupset: SRAM Red Hydraulic, 52/36 chainset, 11-28 cassette

Bars: Zipp Service Course SL-70

Stem: Zipp Service Course SL

Saddle: Fizik Antares

Seatpost: Focus CPX

Wheels: Zipp 202 Disc

Tyres: Schwalbe One, 25c

Weight: 6.81kg

Contact: focus-bikes.com

FOCUS IZALCO MAX DISC

The first super-light disc bike made for the pros

PRICE: £4,300 **CONTACT:** focus-bikes.com

As a rule, us cyclists are quite the bunch of Luddites. Just over 100 years ago, Henri Desgrange, the founder of the Tour de France, expressed his dislike of multiple gears. In the early 2000s, Lance Armstrong shunned a combined brake/gear lever in favour of an old-fashioned down tube shifter. Now, the reluctance to embrace disc brake technology is obvious – no doubt partly due to them not being used by the pros. But that's all set to change.

Later this year, disc brakes will be trialled at WorldTour level for the first time, with full adoption coming in 2016. Keen to be ahead of the game, Focus has been working closely with French pro team AG2R and has now launched the Izalco Max Disc. This is not only the first pro-level disc-brake bike with FlatMount (see 'Mounting Standards', opposite), but also the world's lightest, at a UCI-friendly 6.81kg.

It isn't a ground-up redesign but a modified version of the existing Izalco Max to suit the demands of disc braking. Disc brake frames tend to be asymmetric, as the braking forces only act on one side of the frame and fork, but Focus was keen not to ruin the aesthetics of the bike so the asymmetry runs on the inside.

Instead of beefing up the tube diameters, Focus has increased the wall thicknesses

where required, so the bike rides properly while still maintaining a visual balance. It also has the added benefit of stiffening up the whole bike. The top tube is a little bigger and rear-wheel dropout spacing is now 142mm. Chainstays have also been lengthened to 415mm – partly to account for the altered chainline the wider rear end brings, but also to stabilise handling at high speed. Despite all these additions, the frame still only weighs in at 790g for the 54cm, and the fork is only 320g.

Our first ride was in the mountains in Italy and on this terrain, the bike shines. As soon as the roads turn upwards, you feel the benefit of the lack of weight – the bike climbs superbly. The frame is more than stiff enough when climbing out of the saddle, and Zipp wheels contribute to super-quick acceleration. We tried our hardest on the some of the steeper sections, but couldn't get the rotors to rub against the brake pads.

Once the road tips back down, the disc brakes come into their own. Long descents on carbon clincher rims can be a bit hairy as everything starts to heat up, but the SRAM Red disc brakes are in another league. The redesigned FlatMount callipers have lost a bit of bite over the previous generation, but have gained modulation and power as a result.

Squeeze the lever and you slow down, keep squeezing and you keep scrubbing off speed without ever feeling out of control. Even on a huge descent, there was no noticeable fade in the brakes as we came to a full stop at a junction at the bottom of a 30% gradient section. Sure, the rotors had gone blue from the heat, but they still worked perfectly.

In fact, the SRAM Red 22 groupset is flawless in general, with crisp gear changes and, thanks to the Yaw front derailleur, no issues with chain rub. After another couple of hours riding on what felt like some of Italy's worst roads, we were still quite comfortable. Focus put this down to two things: the SSPS tech in the frame, and the new CPX seatpost.

SSPS stands for 'Stable Stiffness Per Size', which means that as the frame sizes increase, so does the wall thickness in the tubes – the end goal being that there's equal frame stiffness across the board, not super-stiff 50cm frames and flexy 60cm frames. The CPX seatpost is designed to deflect by up to 25mm when stressed, and it works – you can really feel it flex when you hit big bumps.

Two years ago, Shimano told us that the pros were jealous of the amateurs because they could ride disc brake bikes. With the new Izalco Max Disc, Focus has made us jealous of the pros again.

BikesEtc Rating

PROS

Stable descender, excellent disc brakes

CONS

A bike like this doesn't come cheap.

OVERALL
9
10

The Izalco Max Disc weighs in at a UCI-friendly 6.81kg



External cables are an unusual sight on a high-end road bike in 2015



The rear brake is mounted neatly inside the angle of the seatstay and chainstay

MOUNTING STANDARDS



There are currently around 500 different bottom bracket standards and many feared disc brake mounting would go the same way, but Shimano released the FlatMount a few months ago and made it available to all. FlatMount callipers bolt straight through the frame and fork so there are no adaptors to faff with – if you want to swap from 140mm rotors to 160mm, just spin the mount 180 degrees. With SRAM now releasing compatible callipers, FlatMount is here to stay.

On a test ride in the Italian Alps, we were impressed with braking performance



BMC TEAM MACHINE SLR03

A long ride away from its stiff predecessor

PRICE: £1,500 **CONTACT:** evanscycles.com

The first time we rode a BMC was in the French Pyrenees in 2006. It was a technological marvel, rocketed forward like no other bike, and the next day, we couldn't sit down. All that stiffness had come back to bite us in the backside.

Things have moved on a long way for BMC since then. The SLR03 is the cheapest carbon BMC to sport the TeamMachine moniker. Ours is the top-specified £1,500 version (currently marked down to £1,350 at Evans, BMC's UK distributor), which comes equipped with an excellent carbon frame and fork, and Shimano's 11-speed 105 components.

The frame's slender seatstays meet the seat tube in a dropped position, and we enjoyed a great ride on rough roads without any payback.

To achieve pedalling efficiency and stiffness where it is wanted, the down tube is hugely oversized and melts into a broad BB86 bottom bracket shell. Deep-section chainstays extend to the rear axle to ensure all your effort is transferred to the back wheel. The advance in its manners makes it a bike for the everyday.

At 8.88kg, it's not the lightest, but for a bike that serves as an entry point to a boutique brand, the fast, great-looking, *comfortable* BMC TeamMachine SLR03 ticks all the right boxes. 🚴

BikesEtc Rating

PROS

Speedy, good-looking and comfortable

CONS

On the heavy side for a racing bike

OVERALL

9
10

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MATT CRONSHAW OF MADISON GENESIS
TEAM at the Tour de France 2015, Croydon.
Photo: © Larry Rickmott

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4 FSA Power Touch Gel Tape (£25, windwave.co.uk) **5 Cinelli Mike Giant Velvet Bar Tape** (£16, chickencycles.co.uk) **6 Fizik Performance Tape** (£16, extrauk.co.uk) **7 Supacaz Super Sticky Neon Green & Blue Kush Bar Tape** (£33, silverfish-uk.co.uk) **8 Lizard Skins DSP 2.5mm Bar Tape** (£30, 2pure.co.uk)
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MUST
BUY

Brodco's Daylight Secure storeroom has space for the full BikesEtc fleet

USE YOUR SHED

Rescue your bikes from the hostile environment of wagging fingers and eggshell walls and give them a sheltered home of their own

The question of where and how to store multiple expensive bikes is bound to rear its ugly head eventually. And while the idea of tucking our bikes behind the dining table seems reasonable to us, the non-cyclists in our lives tend to think otherwise.

So what to do? For those living in urban areas, garages rarely exist, and even where they do, they're often insufficiently secure. A shed? But a cheap flat-pack with the tiny padlock from the garden centre really isn't going to provide the security you want. Having exhausted our own list of penny-pinching bodes, we began looking at secure bike storage solutions, such as the Brodco composite storeroom (pictured) and the steel Asgard bike storage unit.

LARGE BRODCO DAYLIGHT SECURE

PRICE: from £2,325 (6ft x 10ft as tested, £3,620) **CONTACT:** brodco.co.uk

Brodco's sheds and strongrooms are made using Thermo Poly Rock (TPR), a synthetic material that's lighter and stronger than concrete. Available in a range of sizes and colours, they use metal doors secured with a six-pin anti-bump/snap/drill/pick lock, and zinc-coated bolts. They're so secure, they're the first garden sheds to achieve the Association of Chief Police Officers 'Secured by Design' standard.

BikesEtc plumped for a 6ft x 10ft (1.8m x 3m) DaylightSecure storeroom to test. All we had to do was install a flat solid base; Brodco did the rest.

With no windows, we feared

it might be dark inside, but the translucent roof barely reduces daylight at all, and the building comes well within the 2.5m height limit above which planning permission is required.

Installation took four hours, including the fitting of bike hooks and storage inside. We took six hooks, which integrate into Brodco's Tidy Up storage system, and one Bike Tidy – a top tube holder with a tray for spares.

We're gladly leaving six or seven bikes in the Brodco StoreRoom at present, plus assorted bits and kit. It's not cheap but then nor is replacing a load of bikes. A top investment.

COMPACT ASGARD ACCESS PLUS

PRICE: from £367 (Access Plus 29er, £475) **CONTACT:** asgardsss.co.uk

For storage of up to four bikes, Asgard produces insurance-approved metal bike storage units with surprisingly minimal footprints. Take the Access Plus Bike Shed – it can fit four adult mountain bikes, but measures only 2.3mx1m, and is a maximum of 1.34m tall. We've seen these successfully

installed in people's front yards, making them useful for commuters and kids' bikes. Made of thick galvanised steel, the units are weatherproof and secure, with a 1.6m front opening and gas-assisted easy-lifting lids. It's available in a wide range of sizes, and UK delivery is free of charge.

395,000

**BICYCLES STOLEN
IN ENGLAND AND
WALES IN 2014**

GET IT COVERED

Insurance is perhaps the least exciting purchase you can make in any sphere of modern life – who wants peace of mind when you could be spending your hard-earned cash on shiny stuff? Unfortunately, very few home insurance policies cover bikes of value, which means if you want your pride and joy to be covered, you'll need to look at a specialist.

One of the best we've found is Yellow Jersey, which offers cover for multiple bikes for damage and theft, whether at home or away, and even during racing or sportive action. Cover for a £2,000 bike incurs a premium of £165.30 per year, with additional bikes getting a 50% premium discount.

Another specialist is Dynamo Cover, which sells policies through local bike shops such as Sigma Sport and Wheelbase, as well as online. For our imaginary £2,000 road bike, we received a sample quote of £200. British Cycling offers third-party insurance to its members, and you can upgrade to insure bikes too. With silver membership and a London postcode, we found the premium for our imaginary £2,000 bike came in at £186.

CONTACTS: yellowjersey.co.uk
dynamocover.com
britishcycling.org.uk



GENERAL TIPS

STRAVA PRIVACY ZONE

Thieves can target the homes of riders by tracing them online, so make your home area private on Strava. It's easy to do, just go to Settings – you can do the same for your workplace too.

MIX UP YOUR ROUTES

Taking the same route home every day can make it easy for thieves to follow you home. Mix up the last bit of your commute to keep any potential thieves on their toes.

LOCK IT UP

Dragging a heavy bike lock around with you is awkward. If you have secure bike parking at work, we'd recommend leaving a lock there full time. Invest in a pair of good D-locks like the Kryptonite New York (from £60, madison.co.uk) or Abus Granit Plus (from £55, zyro.co.uk) for home and work. You can also maximise security at home by installing a wall/ground anchor to lock your bike to.

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Photo by: Woody VINO

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Kings of the hills

We went to Mid Wales to put three disc brake sportive bikes to the ultimate test – 195km of mountains, mountains and more mountains

WORDS **MATT PAGE** PHOTOGRAPHY **ANTHONY PEASE**

ON TEST



**LYNSKEY
SPORTIVE
DISC**
£1,400 (frame)



**TREK
DOMANE
6.7 DISC**
£6,000



**SCOTT
SOLACE
15 DISC**
£2,600





Even our three experienced test riders found the Monster sportive route a real challenge





To create the ultimate sportive bike test, we needed a ride with more climbing and descending than anything else in the UK, with everything from super-steep hills to long drags. So we went to Mid Wales, to the village of Llangadog in the foothills of the Brecon Beacons. Our sportive route was the Monster – claiming to be the toughest sportive in the UK, it seemed like a suitable challenge.

Our three riders are all relatively fit, but even so, a 195km route with 4,200 metres of ascent is daunting. Aimed at sportive and endurance riders,

two of our three bikes were carbon, the material of choice for most bike manufacturers.

The Trek Domane was made famous on the cobbles of the Paris-Roubaix with its unique IsoSpeed decoupler – technology designed to isolate feedback from the wheels from the backside of the rider.

Scott has taken a different approach with its Solace – it's not what's been added that makes the difference, it's what has been taken away.

The third was a bit of a curveball, a titanium-framed Lynskey Sportive. Read on to find out how they all fared.



A mid-ride food break is a chance to discuss the finer points of the bikes



Left to right: Lynskey Sportive, Trek Domane 6.7 Disc and Scott Solace 15 Disc

Why disc brakes?

Ever since the bike was invented, braking has been at the rim. While rim brake technology has improved massively over the years, there are several major downsides. Wet weather and buckled rims affect performance and on very long descents – especially with carbon rims – overheating means tubes can fail catastrophically. Plus, rims wear over time, meaning replacing or rebuilding wheels.

Doubters will claim that rim brakes offer all the power they need

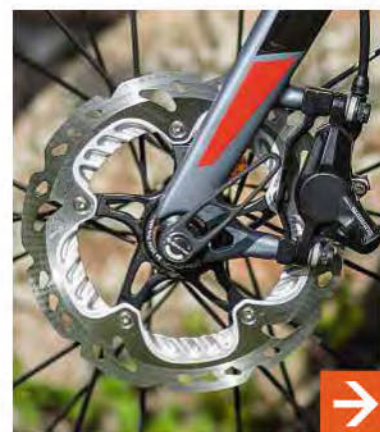
and are lighter than disc brakes, but these are arguments that were floated around 15 years ago when disc brakes first hit the mountain bike market, and you won't find any new mountain bikes with rim brakes outside of a supermarket.

With the UCI allowing disc brakes at selected road racing events later this year, and full introduction planned for 2016, the number of bikes and brakes on offer will increase significantly over the next few years.

Simply put, disc brakes offer superior all-weather braking with more power and more modulation. That means you can easily control the power, giving the perfect level of braking for the road conditions.

Changing a pair of pads is a two-minute job and brake fluid will last at least a year. Bleeding them is very similar to mountain bikes, so any bike shop will be able to do it cheaply.

Unless you plan on racing at UCI-regulated events, it's not a question of why disc brakes, but why not?



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Cycling Plus on the Reacto 5000 in June 2015

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BikesEtc

Bikes Etc on the Reacto Dura Ace in Jan. 2015



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LYNSKEY

Sportive Disc

Can the odd man out in our peloton win over our riders?



The joker among this particular group, the Lynskey Sportive Disc relies on titanium's inherent combination of comfort, light weight and longevity to deliver a competitive sportive racer.

However, the car park lift test shows it to be heavy against the competition. Realistically, a kilo or two makes little difference when you're actually riding, but mentally it can have a big effect.

By the bottom of the first big descent, we've decided it's not very exciting, no matter how twisty the road gets, although the descent does prove that disc brakes are a game changer.

The Lynskey is the most adaptable bike here; pannier rack and mudguard mounts mean it could be a good light tourer/all-season bike. It feels solid, but it has toe overlap that makes steep switchback climbs even harder work. The massive tyres don't help – each weighing 500g, the ThickSlicks have no place on bike of this calibre.

It might feel like a bit of a tank at first, but underneath is a sublime frame that is crying out for some lighter tyres and a better fork.



No time for Matt to enjoy the view as yet another climb demands his attention





BEST POINTS

Predictable and secure handling. Excellent brakes. Stiff and responsive yet incredibly comfortable frame. Complete build kit using quality parts with no compromises.



WORST POINTS

Excessive toe overlap affects cornering. The 500g tyres are the most likely cause of the excess weight and sap a lot of life out of the ride. Harsh fork doesn't come near to matching the comfort of the rear end.



PRICE: £1,400 frame only (£2,500 as tested)

FRAME: Lynskey Sportive Titanium

FORK: Lynskey Endurance Carbon

GROUPSET: Shimano 105, 50/34 chainset, 11-28 cassette

BRAKES: Shimano RS785 Disc Brakes with Goodridge cables

BARS: Easton EA50

STEM: Easton EA50

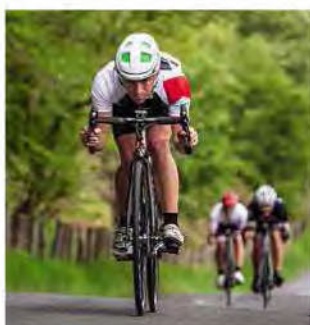
SEATPOST: Easton EA50

SADDLE: Lynskey Sport

WHEELS: DT Swiss R23 Spline

TYRES: Freedom ThickSlick, 28c

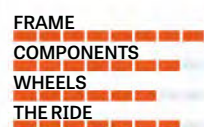
WEIGHT: 10.2kg (size 54)



SUMMARY

In an industry dominated by carbon fibre, the Lynskey Sportive stands out for being different. A titanium frame will almost always be heavier than carbon and that's difficult to ignore, but it offers a fantastic, comfortable ride, although the harsh fork and heavy, sluggish tyres let the side down.

Rating



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#DEFYLIMITS

 **GIANT**

TREK

Domane 6.7 Disc



With its cobbles heritage, this could be the ideal sportive bike



Already a *BikesEtc* test winner, with the £1,900 4.3 Disc model taking top spot in our issue nine group test, how much better would the £6,000 6.7 Disc be?

Early in the ride, the low weight is the first thing to strike us about the bike, especially as it looks stealthier than a B-2 bomber. And with 4,200m of climbing on our route, that lack of weight makes a big difference, while its long, low geometry makes it fast on descents, where the excellent Shimano hydraulic disc brakes are a real asset.

On rough road surfaces, the IsoSpeed decoupler – which isolates feedback from the wheels from the backside of the rider – works well, although comfort from the front end is proving harder to achieve.

Bolt-thru axles, disc brakes and tubeless tyres have opened new doors for manufacturers and with all these features on board – along with mudguard mounts (well hidden on the inside of the fork and seat tube) – the Trek Domane 6.7 Disc is as close to the perfect sportive bike as there is available today. At £6,000, you'd expect no less.



The Domane's low weight is helping to make life easier for Rich on the hills



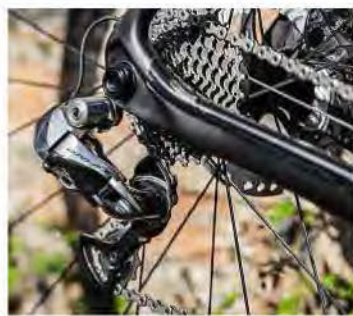
BEST POINTS

Every bit as stiff and quick to respond to pedalling as the best race bikes. The brakes give you confidence to arrive faster into corners. The low and long geometry means downhills are a scream.



WORST POINTS

The Di2 levers rattle a little on fast descents and lack a little of the tactile feel of mechanical systems. The very comfortable rear end isn't quite matched at the front, but the same was true of the other bikes on test.



PRICE: £6,000

FRAME: 600 Series OCLV carbon with IsoSpeed

FORK: Domane IsoSpeed

GROUPSET: Shimano Dura-Ace Di2, 50/34 chainset, 11-28 cassette

BRAKES: Shimano RS785

BARS: Bontrager Race X-Lite IsoZone

STEM: Bontrager Race X-Lite

SEATPOST: Bontrager Ride Tuned Carbon

SADDLE: Bontrager Paradigm RXL

WHEELS: Bontrager Infinity Elite Tubeless

TYRES: Bontrager R3 Hardcase lite, 25c

WEIGHT: 7.6kg (size 56cm)



SUMMARY

Compared to the other bikes on test, the Domane was noticeably lighter – at six grand, it's no surprise. What was a surprise is just how complete the Domane package is. The frame, fork and wheels combine to create a bike that responds to every input. The ultimate sportive or endurance bike.

Rating

FRAME	★★★★★
COMPONENTS	★★★★★
WHEELS	★★★★★
THE RIDE	★★★★★

OVERALL
9.4
10



Professionals – ride on tubular tyres!

with  Handmade in Germany



Attack Comp & Force Comp Set

Competition

Podium TT

Sprinter





SCOTT Solace 15 Disc

Can the Solace keep up with a bike more than twice the price?



The noticeable thing with the Solace Disc isn't the addition of discs, but what Scott has been able to take away as a result – like the pencil-thin, bridgeless seatstays, which are designed to flex and reduce the buzz of the road.

An hour into the ride, we're taking a while to get used to the Solace. It's fun but it takes effort to hold the right line.

Like the other two bikes, the Solace is fitted with Shimano RS785 hydraulic disc brakes and they're superb. Braking can be left later, speed is scrubbed off faster and at no point do the brakes feel grabby or as if they will cause a skid.

The bolt-thru axles provide a stable and secure front end with no discernible flex when throwing yourself downhill or pulling on the bars up a climb.

By halfway, we're getting annoyed with the Scott's internal cable routing on the fork, with an insert that keeps coming out and rattling. But superglue can fix that.

The Scott is perhaps the star of this show, less than half the price of the Trek but not far off being its equal in every way.



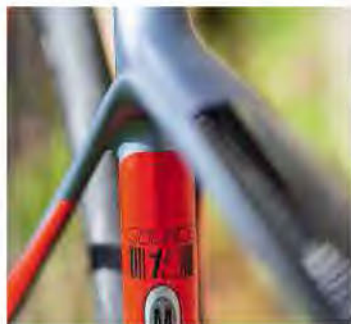
Once he gets to grips with the handling, Huw finds the Scott a lot of fun to ride





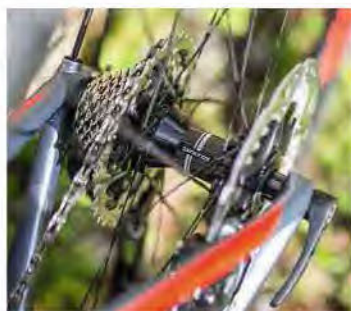
BEST POINTS

Very responsive to pedal inputs yet remains comfortable and covers ground on flat and undulating terrain fast. Big tyre clearance, and a great looking colour scheme.



WORST POINTS

Requires a little more input and effort on the downhill. Annoying cable rattle kept recurring through the ride. The internal front fork cable routing seems superfluous.



PRICE: £2,600

FRAME: Solace HMF Carbon

FORK: Solace HMF Carbon Disc

GROUPSET: Shimano Ultegra 6800

BRAKES: Shimano RS785 with 160mm rotors

BARs: Syncros RR 2.0

STEM: Syncros FL 2.0

SEATPOST: Syncros Carbon FL 1.0 ECL

SADDLE: Syncros FL 2.0

WHEELS: Syncros RP 2.0 Disc

TYRES: Schwalbe Durano Folding, 28c

WEIGHT: 8.4kg (size 54)



SUMMARY

A well-rounded bike with fantastic comfort and handling, it took everything the Monster route threw at it with ease. It's only 1kg heavier than the Trek but is less than half the price. Right now, it's the highest-spec disc brake road bike Scott makes, but that will change next year.

Rating



OVERALL
9.1
10

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 **GIRO**



The final verdict

Three great bikes – but the Trek Domane 6.7 Disc was the clear leader of the pack



Nine hours is a long ride in anyone's book, and if your bike isn't comfy, light and confident, it's going to feel like a very long day in the saddle indeed.

We were looking for a flattering ride, coasting up the climbs, leaving us fresh enough to safely enjoy the many descents.

So the first requirement was disc brakes: all the bikes here use Shimano's hydraulic discs and within an hour of starting the ride, we'd concluded that they are game changers. You can brake later, control your speed more confidently, and we never felt like we were about to initiate a skid.

The Lynskey is a bit of a brute in the guise we tested, but beneath that heavy build kit is a beautiful frame raring to go in all seasons. Build it yourself and you'd have a dream bike.

Trek's Domane is a rocketship downhill thanks to its ground-breaking geometry and impeccable comfort. It's arguably the ultimate sportive bike, but it has the price tag to match.

The Scott Solace meanwhile offers a really excellent ride and much of the same tech as the Trek, like bolt-thru axles and hydraulic discs, but for a fraction of the price. We were truly impressed with this one.

So what is the ultimate sportive bike? The answer depends on the depth of your pockets. One thing's for sure though: it has disc brakes.

LYNSKEY SPORTIVE DISC £1,400 (frame)



Rating



OVERALL
7.1
10

TREK DOMANE 6.7 DISC £6,000



Rating



OVERALL
9.4
10

SCOTT SOLACE 15 DISC £2,600



Rating



OVERALL
9.1
10

LAURA
TROTT

Golden girl

Double Olympic track cycling champion Laura Trott talks training, milk guzzling and her quest for more gold medals at Rio 2016

WORDS MARK BAILEY PHOTOGRAPHY ALEXANDER RHIND

Laura Trott says that whirling around the bends of a velodrome at over 55kmh can feel a bit like 'spinning around in a washing machine'. But interviewing the 23-year-old livewire from Hertfordshire can be just as exhilarating, amusing and discombobulating as any high-speed dash around the track. Within a few minutes, she merrily leapfrogs from her hatred of 'hairy' strawberries to her love of Chinese food; from getting squashed at Bruce Springsteen concerts as a kid to being serenaded at the London velodrome in 2012 by Sir Paul McCartney and 7,000 fans with a rendition of *Hey Jude*; and from her lifelong routine of being violently sick after intense training sessions to her surprising – and constitutionally impressive – ability to neck a pint of milk in one go. In the middle of a question about Rio 2016, she interrupts her own answer to announce, 'Hang on, I've got the video online here – it took me 8.4 seconds to down the milk. Not bad. Sorry, totally changing the subject...'

The fast-riding, fast-talking, 5ft 4in pocket rocket first blasted into the hearts and minds of the British sporting public when she won two gold medals at ➔



London 2012, aged 20. The first came in the team pursuit, in which two teams of three riders – starting at opposite sides of the track – ride in synchrony for 3km around the velodrome in a bid to ‘pursue’ the other team and edge ahead. Her team-mates then were Dani King and Jo Rowsell, although the event has since been upgraded to a four-person, 4km race. Her second gold came in the omnium, a multidiscipline event featuring flying laps, time trials, head-to-head battles and chaotic group races.

However, it was Trott’s effervescent personality, disarming honesty and defiant ability to overcome a remarkable series of health challenges – including asthma, an undiagnosed condition that caused her to sporadically pass out, and the acid reflux problem which causes her to be sick after training – which ensured her story transcended the boundaries of the velodrome and leapt into the mainstream. Popular, affable and refreshingly normal, Trott not only completes extraordinary cycling achievements herself but she has a unique ability to make other cyclists feel like they can too.

‘It’s a nice feeling to think I might have inspired people to get into cycling, but almost weird for me because I don’t feel like an idol,’ she says. ‘I idolised Kelly Holmes [2004 Olympic 800m and 1,500m champion] and Bradley Wiggins when I was growing up, but I’ve never spoken to Kelly about how it must

have felt for her to have fans. I just find it weird because I’m such a normal person. I remember meeting Bradley at the London Bike Show when I was a kid and it felt amazing, but if a kid came up to me today I would feel like I’m still a kid myself!’

Trott has a magnetic appeal to fans and sponsors. After London 2012, her local sports centre in Cheshunt, Hertfordshire, was renamed the Laura Trott Leisure Centre in her honour. She is an ambassador for the Prudential RideLondon-Surrey 100 event – a 100-mile sportive that will attract up to 25,000 riders in August. She has enjoyed afternoon tea at the Women’s Institute in Wimbledon, helping to promote women’s sport, and at the London Nocturne bike race in 2013, she was handed a raw chicken by a butcher at Smithfield Market who was simply overwhelmed to meet her. Life has, it seems, been quite strange for Laura Trott since London 2012.

‘Oh, it’s just incredible,’ says Trott. ‘The attention after London 2012 was crazy. But it was an amazing experience. The feeling you get on that podium and the pride that comes over you... It was such an unreal moment. I remember how I felt when I was listening to Sir Paul McCartney and all the crowd singing *Hey Jude* when I got my medal. I was standing there thinking, I don’t know what is ever going to top this.’

In the following years, Trott stormed to gold in both the team pursuit and omnium at the 2013 and

‘It’s nice but weird to have young fans idolise you. I still feel like a kid myself!’



2014 European Track Cycling Championships. She also won gold in the team pursuit and silver in the omnium at both the 2013 and 2014 Track Cycling World Championships. But she wasn’t happy to claim two silvers at this year’s World Championships in February. ‘At the time, I was disappointed,’ she admits. ‘You want to win every race you enter. But looking back, I’ve improved so much since the year before, especially with my speed in the flying lap event. So I see these events as stepping stones towards Rio 2016. I hope to go to the Worlds next year [held in London in March] and try to get back the team pursuit and omnium titles. I’m getting closer, but little things haven’t been quite right. I want to go to Rio 2016 and win the titles I got in 2012.’

ROAD RACER

It’s a common misconception that track cyclists rarely ride on the road. Trott routinely trains on the roads around Manchester (where she is based in order to be close to the Manchester velodrome) to help build fitness. She also competes in road races for the Matrix Pro Cycling team. ‘We do a lot on the road because we train here in the UK and we go out to Majorca too,’ she explains. ‘We need that background endurance to help us when we get on the track.’ Psychology also plays its part: ‘It’s easier to race than train because you always have a target.’

Trott won the Prudential RideLondon Grand Prix in 2013 and the following year she triumphed in the national road race championships held in South Wales, losing her title to Lizzie Armitstead at this year’s championships in Lincoln, finishing a still creditable third. In May this year she won the Milk Race, held on a street circuit in Nottingham, beating British team-mate Katie Archibald by just three thousandths of a second. ‘A win is a win, isn’t it?’ she says, chuckling. ‘When I crossed the finish line, I didn’t know if I’d got it or not. I was super happy



Above: Winning the RideLondon Grand Prix with Wiggle-Honda. Top: Trott now races for Matrix Pro Cycling



when I found out, but that photo finish is going to stick with me forever. I made a lunge for the line but for the first time. On the track, you tend to be in the saddle so you don't really do that.'

The road-racing circuit also enables Trott to enjoy some head-to-head battles with her British team-mates such as Dani King. 'It's good that we all ride for different teams now,' she says. 'Last year Dani and I both rode for Wiggle-Honda and we sometimes tripped over each other as we were both good enough to win races but had to work together. Now we can race each other, which is fun!'

The grass-roots boom in road cycling in Britain has wowed even professional athletes like Trott. 'The buzz is very exciting,' she says. 'I always see it when I go to the RideLondon race. My dad is doing it this year. My sister [Emma, a fellow cyclist who rode for the Dutch team Boels-Dolmans between 2012 and 2014 before retiring] did it last year. My uncle's done it. It's amazing to see how many people have got into cycling. I remember going to races and there would be only 10 people there. Growing up, I could see the health benefits of cycling from my mum. When I was a kid, she lost six and a half stone [40kg] in 18 months by cycling. So to inspire people to get on their bikes gives me a nice feeling inside.'

FIGHTING FIT

Trott's sporting story is not one of a child prodigy who was predestined for greatness. She endured – but overcame – a series of health problems during her formative years. Born with a collapsed lung in Harlow, Essex, in 1992, she spent her first weeks in intensive care. Growing up in Hertfordshire, she suffered from asthma. 'I can remember having a few asthma attacks and it was terrifying,' she recalls.

On the advice of her doctor, she took up sport to help improve her body's ability to cope with the asthma. She enjoyed swimming, but trampolining was her real passion until she began to suffer from an undiagnosed condition which caused her to pass out in mid-air. 'I had to have brain scans but nobody was sure what it was so I had to stop,' she says. When her mother Glenda took up cycling, Trott did too.

'My first cycling memory is from when my parents bought me a road bike but I was too small for it – ➔

HOW TO RIDE 100 MILES

Ahead of the Prudential RideLondon-Surrey 100 event in August, Laura Trott reveals five tips to help any rider survive a hilly 100-mile course



PREP FOR THE HILLS

'Ride similar-length hills before the race so it's not a shock to the system. If you haven't got big hills near you, try doing hill repeats instead. Stick to a steady rhythm and try to alternate between being in the saddle and standing up.'



BUILD UP YOUR ENDURANCE

'A good way to build endurance is to ride in what we call zone 3 [typically 75-82% of your maximum heart rate] which is not crazily fast but not too slow. You'll get fit but you'll also build up your stamina ready for the long ride.'



GIVE YOUR BODY FUEL

'Whenever I race on the road, we're told to aim for a mouthful of food every 15 minutes and about 500ml of fluids an hour. Little and often is best. On the night before a race, I eat a tuna bake. For breakfast I'll have porridge or Special K, with some toast and eggs.'



GET COMFORTABLE

'There's no need to be really low down and aerodynamic like I am on a track bike. A big 100-mile ride could take over seven hours, so the most important thing is that you ride in a comfortable position so you won't be aching all day.'



PACE YOURSELF

'Don't go flat out on the first climb or push too hard at the beginning. Start steady and make sure you can get all the way around because a lot of the hills are later on in the course. There's nothing worse than running out of energy before the end.'



TIMELINE TO VICTORY

2010

Wins two gold medals and two silver medals in the British junior national track championships

2011

Claims first World title in the team pursuit and a European double in the omnium and team pursuit

2012

Storms to omnium and team pursuit double in both the World Championships and Olympic Games



2013

Wins the Prudential RideLondon Grand Prix for her first major road victory plus the world title in the team pursuit and two European track golds

2014

Earns the illustrious British national road race title, a Commonwealth Games gold in the points race, two European golds and the world title in the team pursuit



2015

Wins the Milk Race, earns silver in both the team pursuit and omnium at the World Track Championships, and takes third place in the British national road race

the handlebars were too far away and I couldn't pull the brakes. I crashed into a barrier, which my dad wasn't impressed with. I also crashed at [the outdoor velodrome at Welwyn Garden City] because my dad didn't screw my pedal in properly and it fell off. I was only eight – I didn't know how to use an allen key.'

Trott enjoyed racing on the concrete and grass tracks of Hertfordshire. 'I was really good on grass tracks because I'm light so I just bounce over the top of the surface where others just sink. Especially if it had been raining – I could get all muddy but just float on by. I remember me and my sister beat Victoria Pendleton one time. It was a real highlight. It was an endurance race so it wasn't really her thing [the two-time Olympic track champion was a sprinter] but it felt like a big deal to us.'

Ever since her early forays into cycling, Trott has been haunted by the acid reflux problem that causes her to be sick after intense training sessions. 'It's nowhere near as bad as it used to be,' she says. 'Every Wednesday night we would do a sprint session at Welwyn Wheelers and I would just wander over to the middle of the track and be sick. When I was at the Commonwealth Games, they showed it on TV which was great! But I can control it better now by having things like Yakult to settle my stomach.'

Trott soon developed into a powerful racer. Although she lacked the brute force of other riders, she was fast, aerodynamic and harboured a murderous will to win. She can recall beating boys to win a bronze medal at the under-12 national track championships. She also broke a junior record in the 2km pursuit. 'I was just doing it for fun' she says. 'Nobody knew who I was. They were like, who the hell is this girl who just rocked up and broke the record?'

In 2005, at the age of 13, Trott was scouted by British Cycling and selected for their Talent Team – a coaching programme aimed at developing gifted young riders. Aged 15, she progressed to the Olympic Development Programme in which athletes are nurtured for future Olympic success. She later moved to Manchester. 'It was funny because all of a sudden I had to look after myself,' she says. 'But that time really helped me to grow up.'

GOLD AMBITION

After winning two British junior titles on the track in 2009, Trott won her first senior European medal in the team pursuit in 2010 and her first world title in the same event in 2011. In 2012, she won the omnium and team pursuit at the world championships before repeating the double at the Olympic Games. 'I might have been disappointed if I hadn't won at London. I was young but I was still world champion at the time.'

Although she enjoys riding on the road, the track has always been her passion. 'I like the atmosphere and enjoy how the crowd get to know you personally. In a velodrome, they can see every part of the race whereas on the road, you just whizz by.' Plus, she would rather suffer splinters from the wooden boards of the track than endure road rash: 'If you get a bad splinter, the doctor just cuts it out of you and that's the end of it.'

Despite her stellar success, Trott is keen to emphasise that the life of a pro cyclist is not always as glamorous as people presume. 'I love what I do but cycling is a 24/7 job,' she says. 'My dad is an accountant so he gets stressed about work but he can go home afterwards and switch off. Whereas if I walk around a supermarket, I'm constantly thinking, should I be sitting down and resting? If I want to go for a meal I can only eat certain things. If my friends want to go to McDonald's, I can't. People forget that.'

'I entered a 2km pursuit for fun and broke the record'

Everyone says I'm living the dream – and I am living my dream – but it's also really stressful at times.'

There's no doubt that Trott is a naturally garrulous and chirpy athlete, but having fun also helps to keep her career in perspective and prevent the pressures of pro cycling from becoming overwhelming. When she's not training, she's happy to walk her sproodles (a springer spaniel-poodle cross), Sprolo and Pringle, with her fiancé Jason Kenny, the fellow British track cyclist. A lifelong fan of Bruce Springsteen, she goes to his concerts whenever she can ('I love *No Surrender*,' she says). Nor does she get too worked up about the rigours of a professional athlete's diet – cooking is not her forte. 'I use a Thermomix which lets you throw in lots of ingredients and does all the hard work for you,' she says, chuckling again. 'But Jason normally cooks for us. I love Chinese but we rarely get to have it.'

Trott seems far too amiable to be such a ruthless assassin on the track. But behind all the giggles and the soppy dogs lies a ferociously competitive spirit. The track star already has Rio 2016 in her sights. 'I always remember the feeling I had at London 2012 when I was standing on the podium with my medal, and it's that feeling that keeps me going,' she explains. 'I want to get that feeling all over again.'

Laura Trott is an ambassador for Prudential RideLondon. Visit prudentialrideLondon.co.uk. Photos: Alamy

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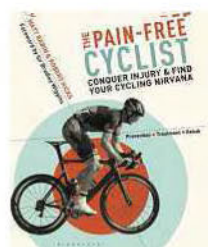
NO PAIN ALL GAIN

Beat those aches and sprains and get back on the bike in no time at all

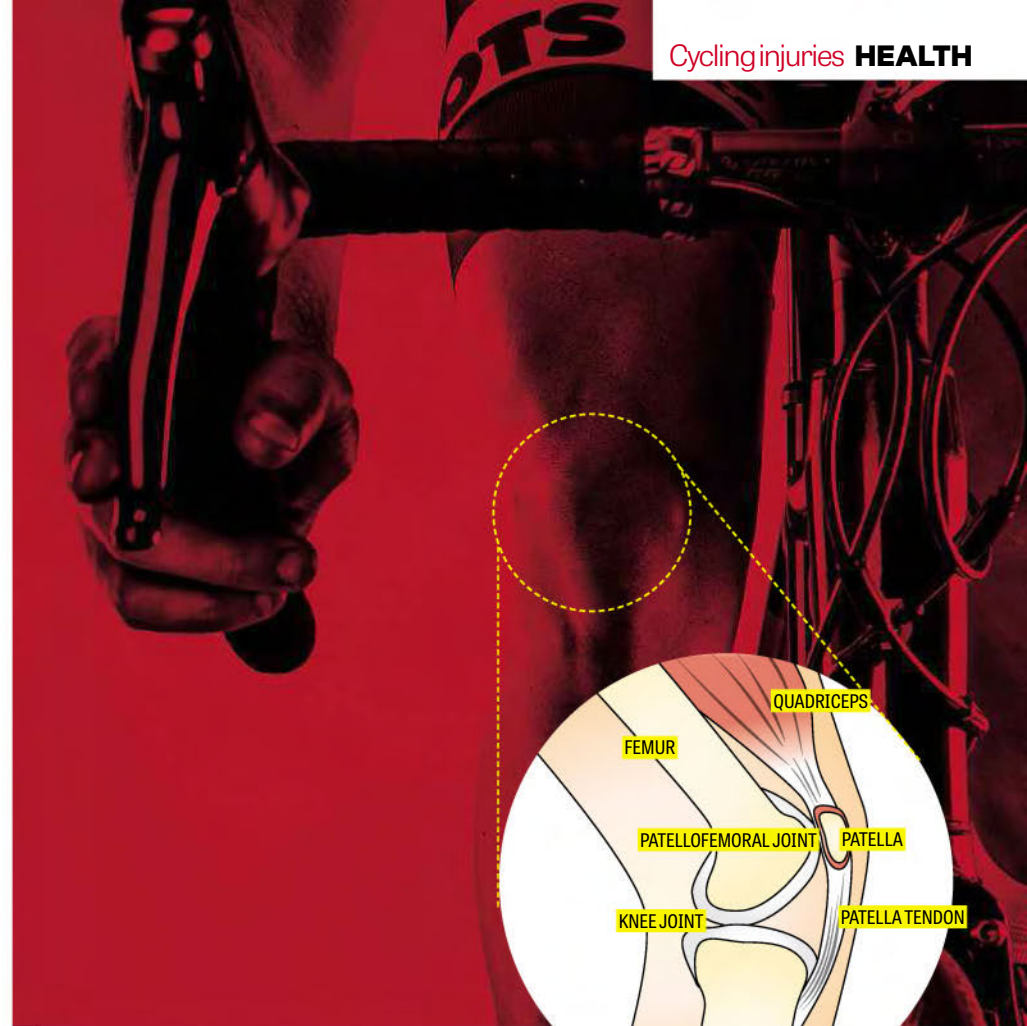
Wouldn't it be nice if you could guarantee a pain-free ride every time you went out on your bike? Unfortunately, while cycling might not be as aggressive as boxing or as high-impact as running, the repetitive action of pedalling combined with the unnatural body position means overuse injuries are almost inevitable. The other danger point is, of course, crashing. Potholes, bad weather, other road users and lack of concentration all create a dangerous cocktail that can get the better of even the most experienced rider.

It can be tempting to ignore aches and pains; after all, they often mean frustrating time off the bike. But pain is your body's red light – the warning sign that something isn't right. Ignore them and you risk lengthy periods off the bike, recurring injuries and significant periods of pain.

Luckily, most cycling injuries are simple to treat yourself. In this extract from *The Pain Free Cyclist*, we've listed six of the most common ailments with all the info you need on how to identify them, their causes and how to go about treating them.



For more information about cycling injuries, how to treat them and prevent them from recurring, see *The Pain-Free Cyclist* by Matt Rabin and Robert Hicks (£16.99, Bloomsbury)



01 / KNEE PAIN

PAIN SCALE: Mild-moderate **TIME OFF BIKE:** 1-2 weeks

Knee pain is common among cyclists and patellofemoral pain syndrome (PFPS) is the primary culprit. With every turn of the pedals, the knee flexes and extends. The knee only has a single direction of movement, and problems occur because the forces through the leg aren't always in a straight line. This common overuse injury can disappear quickly. Just don't ignore it.

SYMPTOM CHECKER

- Dull ache at the front of the knee that comes on for no apparent reason.
- Pain may begin mildly and increase as it progresses.
- Discomfort during power phase of pedal stroke.
- Increased pain with increased effort.
- Pain may come and go throughout ride.
- Often associated with lower back stiffness and discomfort.
- Knee not usually swollen or tender.
- Pain often relieved once off the bike.

BIKE CHECK

SADDLE HEIGHT This is the first and most obvious place to look for causes of knee pain. If the saddle has dropped by as little as 1-2mm, it will reduce the angle of your knee at the top of the pedal stroke, putting more strain on the front of the knee.

CLEATS If these have moved, it can alter how your kneecap glides over the joint, as your foot is in a slightly different position, putting different stresses on the knee.

CLOTHING PFPS may occur during the winter simply due to the type of clothing you are wearing. For example, tight leggings or knee warmers could compress the kneecap, causing irritation and pain.

TREATMENT

■ Ice the area 2-3 times a day for 10-20 minutes. Continue for as long as you have knee pain. Rest off the bike and avoid any other activity that aggravates the knee.

■ Use a foam roller to loosen the key muscles: quads, glutes and piriformis, tensor fasciae latae, and calves. Tightness in these muscles can affect how the knee functions when cycling. Posture exercises will help improve the mechanics of the lumbar spine and pelvis.

■ You can be back on your bike after two to three weeks, and start a core exercise routine. Kinesio tape can help manage any remaining symptoms.

■ If four weeks have passed and you're still getting knee pain, osteotherapy, massage or physiotherapy may help. ➔

PILLS 'N' CHILLS

When the pain gets too much, these over-the-counter products can help



PARACETAMOL

This painkiller can help with mild to moderate pain such as sprains, stiffness and headaches. It is often combined with other over-the-counter meds so always read the label.



NON-STEROIDAL ANTI-INFLAMMATORY DRUGS (NSAIDs)

NSAIDs, such as aspirin and ibuprofen, work by blocking the production of enzymes involved in the production of pain and inflammation.



TOPICAL NSAIDs

Gels (such as Voltarol), creams and patches that are applied directly to the painful area are less likely to cause stomach irritation than oral NSAIDs. Choose between oral and topical NSAIDs – never use both to avoid risk of overdosing.



FREEZE SPRAY

Mimics the effect of ice by causing a cooling effect on the skin, though not as effectively as ice. Avoid using on damaged skin as it can cause irritation.

DOSAGE

500mg-1g every 4-6 hours. No more than four doses in 24 hours.

Ibuprofen: 200-300mg 3-4 times daily. Aspirin: 1-3 300mg tablets every 4-6 hours, no more than 4g (13 tablets) in 24 hours.

Varies between products, usually a pea-sized blob (2-4g) applied directly to the painful area 3-4 times a day.

02 / ACHILLES TENDON

PAIN SCALE: Mild-moderate **TIME OFF BIKE:** 2-6 weeks

With every pedal stroke you feel a sharp sensation at the bottom of your leg. The more you ride, the worse it gets. Sounds like Achilles tendinopathy. You can't ride a bike without force going through the Achilles tendon. With the repetitive strain of pedalling, microscopic damage occurs to the fibres of the Achilles tendon. When the breakdown of the tendon is occurring at a faster rate than the body can repair the damage, Achilles tendinopathy will be the outcome.

SYMPTOM CHECKER

- Symptoms may begin as stiffness in the Achilles tendon.
- Dull ache of the tendon throughout pedal stroke.
- Sharp to searing local Achilles pain as it progresses, worse when climbing.
- Pain almost always on one leg only.
- Stiffness in Achilles on walking when you get off the bike, and in the morning.
- Pain may come and go during a ride in early stages, becoming more continuous.
- Tender to touch.
- Tight calf on affected side.
- Pain can spread into lower calf or heel bone while riding.

BIKE CHECK

SADDLE HEIGHT

If this has dropped, it will slightly change your pedal stroke, meaning your calf muscles will be used in a slightly different pattern, which could lead to changes in the pull on the Achilles.

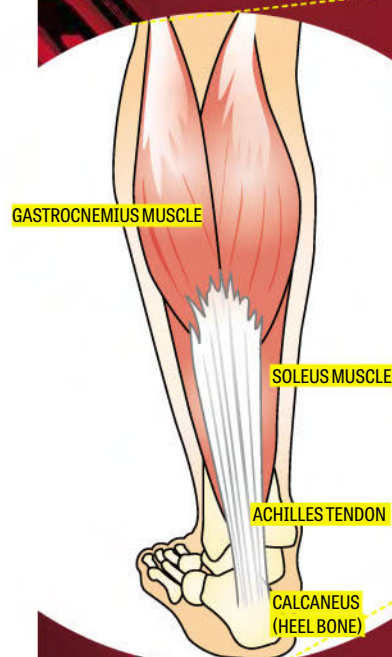
CLEATS If your cleats have moved, it can lead to different leverage on the Achilles while riding. Try moving the cleats back 2mm.

CLOTHING

Certain shoes or shoe covers may be tight, causing mild compression on or around the Achilles at the back of the foot.

TREATMENT

- Treatment of Achilles tendinopathy is a complex subject with many different factors that make no two cases the same. Luckily, there are many standard techniques you can apply to address the problem.
- Ice the area 2-3 times a day for 10-15 minutes at a time. Continue to ice for as long as you have pain. Calf stretches and strengthening exercises can help relieve Achilles pain. Rest and avoid anything that causes stress on the tendon, for example, running. Walking around normally will help maintain normal function though.
- After two weeks, if you're free from symptoms off the bike, now's the time to get back to cycling.
- If everything is back to normal and you're riding pain-free by now, that's great. If not, increase the specific strengthening work of your calf muscles – this will help provide improved support for your Achilles tendon.
- If after six weeks having gone through all of the above you are still not comfortable on the bike and are experiencing Achilles pain, you should seek help from a physiotherapist.



03 / IT BAND

PAIN SCALE: Moderate-severe
TIME OFF BIKE: 2 weeks

With every turn of the pedals, you feel a sharp pain on the outside of your knee. Iliotibial band friction syndrome (ITBFS) is the most common cause of pain here. ITBFS occurs when the continuous repetitive bending and straightening of the knee leads to irritation between the ITB and the thigh bone, causing inflammation and pain.

SYMPTOM CHECKER

- Dull pain on the outside of the knee.
- Progresses to sharp pain on bigger gear efforts or climbing.
- Feels like a hot poker is stabbing you in the knee.
- May feel a 'clicking' sensation on the
- outside of the knee when cycling.
- Outside of the knee can become swollen and tender to touch.
- The hip and lower back on same side of the knee pain can become painful too.

BIKE CHECK

SADDLE HEIGHT

If the saddle is too low, there'll be increased knee flexion during the pedal stroke and the leg muscles aren't working at their appropriate optimal lengths.

CLEATS If these have moved even slightly, there'll be a subtle change in the energy transfer from the feet all the way through the legs, which might be enough to lead to ITBFS symptoms.

TREATMENT

■ Ice the painful area 2-3 times a day for 10-20 minutes. Massage can help to release tension in the buttock muscles that control the ITB, but stay away from the painful area to avoid irritation. Exercise is best avoided, especially any activity that causes repetitive knee flexion, such as running or rowing. Begin to work on the lower back and pelvic muscles, which are linked

with ITB function. Getting these muscles stronger and more readily engaged will help comfort, stability and symmetry on the bike.

■ After two weeks, it's time to get back on your bike.

■ If after four weeks you're still getting pain, seek expert help – see a chiropractor, osteopath, physio or sports doctor. A bike fitter may also be able to help. ➔

TENSOR FASCIA LATAE

ILIOTIBIAL BAND

04 / NECK STRAIN

PAIN SCALE: Mild-severe
TIME OFF BIKE: 1 week

The neck joints never get a moment's rest while riding – you're constantly looking out for the next corner, the next person to step out on the road, the lights to change, the next pothole to avoid. You might turn your head to look for traffic the same way you have a thousand times, but this time you've feel a twang, a slight pain on one side of your neck that gets worse when you move your head and makes it hard to keep your head upright. You may have strained one of the cervical facet joints, and now the neck muscles have gone into spasm, resulting in a hot, intense pain.

SYMPTOM CHECKER

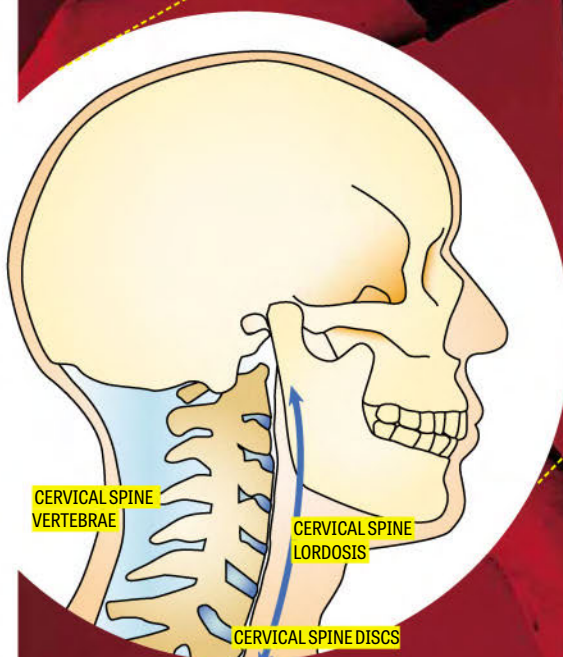
- Rapid onset of local dull ache at back of the neck, usually to one side.
- Sharp pain with certain neck movements, rotation restricted.
- Difficulty keeping head upright on the bike.
- Mild ache into the shoulder and arm.
- Headache at back of the head that may extend behind the eyes on one side or both while riding.
- Pain always noticeable when on the bike, eases off the bike.
- Neck muscles feel in spasm and are sore to touch.

BIKE CHECK

HANDLEBARS The more racy your riding position, the more you'll irritate your complaint. If your handlebars have rolled forwards slightly, you may be in a more aggressive position.

TREATMENT

- Ice the painful area for 10-15 minutes 2-3 times per day. Continue to ice for three days or as long as you have pain off the bike. Stay off the bike for seven days after the onset of neck pain and avoid any activity that will aggravate your neck – for example, running, weights and swimming. Gentle neck and upper back exercises can help reduce the discomfort and increase mobility.
- You can be back on your bike after a week's rest. Try core neck strengthening exercises.
- If after four weeks you're still getting neck pain when you ride, visit an osteopath or chiropractor.



FIRST AID FOR INJURIES

RICE – rest, ice, compression and elevation – do you really understand it?



REST

Nowadays, rest means reducing or stopping any activity that aggravates the pain rather than putting your feet up. For example, if you're getting knee pain when riding but not when walking or swimming, then walking and swimming are fine. If you get the same knee pain when you're running, then running should be avoided.



ICE

Applying ice reduces the temperature of damaged tissue, causing the local blood vessels to constrict, which will help reduce swelling and alleviate symptoms. Ice is the easiest and safest form of anti-inflammatory and painkiller there is and can provide great relief from symptoms in the first week after an injury.



COMPRESSION & ELEVATION

For cyclists, Kinesio tape covers the compression and elevation element of the RICE mnemonic – this flexible adhesive tape can help support and protect vulnerable, painful parts of the body. The next time you watch a pro bike race, look closely at the riders and you'll likely see these colourful strips of tape running down the front of their legs.

05 / LOWER BACK PAIN

PAIN SCALE: Mild-severe **TIME OFF BIKE:** 1 week

Almost all muscles that provide stability and help turn the pedals attach in the lower back. Nonspecific lower back pain (NLBP) has three main causes in cycling: one is traumatic (such as a crash) and the others are through overuse – 'creep' and shearing forces. Creep is the result of prolonged stress in the lumbar spine when riding in an aggressive position, while shearing is due to stress on the sacroiliac joints caused by the rocking motion of the pelvis while pedalling. Creep can be reduced by a good bike fit; working on your core helps minimise shearing forces.

SYMPTOM CHECKER

- Dull ache/burning pain in the lower back that builds.
- Can feel like the lower back is throbbing.
- Discomfort often continuous once started.
- Sharp pain on certain movements
- or going over bumps in the road.
- Difficulty generating normal power or maintaining normal speed.
- Pain in buttocks or groin.
- Pain into legs, often no further than the knee.

BIKE CHECK

SADDLE HEIGHT

If this has dropped, it will alter the angle of your lower back, which can contribute towards you developing NLBP.

SADDLE POSITION

If the saddle slides backwards or tilts, it will also change the angle of your lower back, making you reach further.

TREATMENT

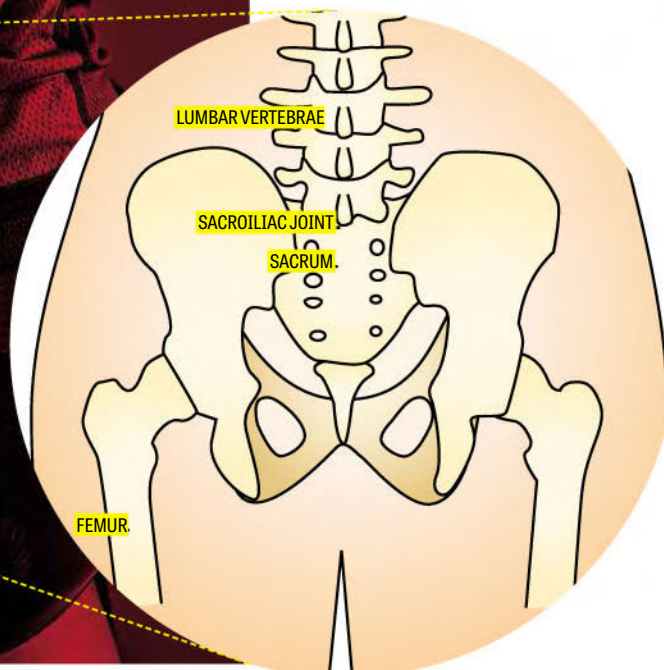
■ Ice the area 2-3 times a day for 10-15 minutes at a time. Continue to ice for the first week or for as long as you have pain off the bike. You shouldn't need to ice for much longer than a week but you can continue to do so if you need to.

■ Rest and avoid any exercise or activity that aggravates the lower back. However, it's important to maintain a balance so try and keep mobile and active – walking, for example. Being sedentary can cause the back to seize, so if you have a desk-bound job, avoid sitting for longer than 30 minutes at a time.

Gentle back-stretching exercises will help improve comfort, stability and symmetry on and off the bike.

■ You can be back on your bike after two to four weeks. Now is time to start a core exercise routine. Kinesio tape can help support the lower back – you'll need someone else to apply it for you correctly.

■ If after four weeks you've not made any significant progress and are still getting pain in the lower back when you ride, it's time to visit an osteopath, chiropractor or physiotherapist.





06 / HANDLEBAR PALSY

PAIN SCALE: Mild-moderate **TIME OFF BIKE:** 1 week

You get pins and needles in your hand, most notably your ring and little fingers. It gradually builds till the fingers and half of your hand are numb. You may have developed an ulnar neuropathy at the wrist, when the ulnar nerve that travels down from the shoulder is stretched and compressed as it enters the hand. This injury is so specific to cycling, it's known as 'handlebar palsy'.

SYMPTOM CHECKER

- Pins and needles in hand, ring and little finger.
- Numbness of the bottom of hand, ring finger and little finger.
- Dull ache or sharp pain in hand, ring finger and little finger.
- Weakness of hand, difficulty shifting gears and braking.
- Temporary relief of symptoms as you shake your hand out.
- Symptoms made worse when riding the drops.

TREATMENT

■ Symptoms will normally only be present on the bike but can last for a few hours after. Shifting between different hand positions while riding is the quickest way to alleviate symptoms. Also try different pairs of gloves, as the padding between them will vary in both placement and thicknesses.

■ Ice the area 2-3 times a day for 10-15 minutes for 2-3 days.

■ The first week is about keeping symptoms at bay while working on areas of the body that can help support comfort and stability

for the upper body. Neck and shoulder-strengthening exercises can help reduce the pressure and tension on the ulnar nerve.

■ You can return to cycling after a week off allowing things to settle down. If you get hand symptoms initially, don't worry as they should be better than before. However, if symptoms progress, stop. Have a few more days off.

■ If after four weeks you can't shake off the symptoms, an osteopath, chiropractor or physio may be able to help.

GET TO HOSPITAL



Suspect a broken bone? You can't treat this yourself, so go to A&E. Just don't cycle there

FRACTURES

Scaphoid fracture

PAIN SCALE:

Mild-severe

TIME OFF BIKE:

8 weeks minimum

SYMPTOM CHECKER

- Pain in wrist at bottom of thumb.
- Swelling at bottom of thumb.
- Pain gripping the handlebars when you try to ride after crash.
- After initial pain has eased, a residual pain often remains later that day and into the next day.
- Scaphoid fracture should be suspected if the above symptoms last longer than a day.



The three most common fractures in cycling are the collarbone, the ribs and the scaphoid, which is one of the eight small bones that make up the wrist, and is normally fractured if you fall from your bike on to an outstretched hand. Symptoms are a deep, dull ache in the wrist at the base of the thumb gets worse when gripping and is accompanied by swelling.

When a scaphoid fracture is suspected, go to hospital. If it doesn't heal properly, it can lead to long-term complications such as prolonged aches and pain, decreased grip strength, reduced wrist movement and development of arthritis.

Ribs

PAIN SCALE:

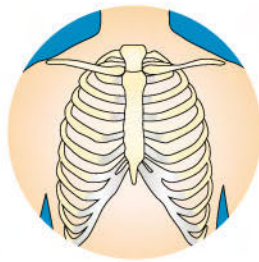
Moderate-severe

TIME OFF BIKE:

2-4 weeks

SYMPTOM CHECKER

- Focal pain over the damaged ribs, made worse when touched.
- Pain usually aggravated by breathing in deeply or coughing.
- Certain movements cause sharp pain.
- Pinpoint pain that doesn't move, stays directly over the fractured rib.



Rib fractures usually occur following a crash when you land on the side of your torso. Ribs usually fracture at the point of impact. Of the 12 pairs of ribs, the most commonly fractured are the fifth to tenth, at the mid to lower end of the ribcage.

When ribs break, the muscles and soft tissue between them normally keep the ribs in place. In big enough impacts, however, the fractures can become displaced, causing more damage as the end of the rib can puncture a lung causing either air or blood to seep into the space between the lung and chest. This significantly interferes with breathing.

Collarbone

PAIN SCALE:

Moderate-severe

TIME OFF BIKE:

2-6 weeks

SYMPTOM CHECKER

- Extreme pain, tenderness and swelling over the front of the collarbone area.
- Bruising of the skin over the collarbone.
- Often a displacement of the bone can be felt.
- Clutching arm into body.
- Shoulder may be slumped downwards and forwards as is no longer supported by the collarbone.
- 'Tenting' of the skin as the bone pokes through.



Most pro cyclists break their collarbone at some point in their career – it fractures easily when you land on your shoulder or put your arm out to break a fall, as it's one of the weakest bones in the body and in an exposed position with no muscle cover. If you suspect a collarbone fracture, try to keep the arm still. Then it's off to the hospital for an X-ray. The priority is that the fracture heals properly. Many collarbone fractures don't fuse together properly, often leading to shortening of the clavicle which can cause pain and compromise shoulder function. The only real treatment is surgery.

ALITTLE EXTRA HELP

Sometimes you need an expert. But with so many of them, where do you start?



PHYSIOTHERAPIST

Sports physios can help to restore natural balance and functioning of the body by correcting biomechanical issues. A physio with an understanding of cycling can help to assess riding position and bike fit. The first choice when recovering from surgery.



OSTEOPATH

Osteopaths treat the body as a whole, paying particular attention to the spine, using hands-on treatment such as manipulations and soft tissue work. Search for a registered osteopath at osteopathy.org.uk.



CHIROPRACTOR

Hands-on treatment for biomechanical problems with joints, muscles and tissues, predominantly the spine. Chiropractors offer similar treatment to osteopaths but using slightly different methods.



DOCTOR

Your doctor may not be able to help with every problem but will be able to refer you to someone more appropriate. Your doctor will also be able to prescribe stronger painkillers than are available over the counter if required.



SPORTS MEDICINE PHYSICIAN

A specialist doctor whose role is to treat athletes. They'll often be able to help with injury prevention through training techniques and can refer you to other practitioners as appropriate.



BIKE FITTER

It can be beneficial to return to your bike fitter for an opinion on your injury.




MASSEUR

There's not a lot of evidence that massage can cure injury, but it may make you feel better and help you recover from injury quicker.



ACUPUNCTURIST

Generally performed by a practitioner of traditional Chinese medicine, acupuncture involves inserting fine needles into the body for pain relief, healing and general wellbeing. 

THE MODEL CYCLIST

Style-conscious cycling brands are upping the ante when it comes to looking slick both in and out of the saddle. Here are our urban outfits

WORDS **RYAN THOMPSON**



Unless you've been living under a pile of chalky rubble on the upper slopes of Mont Ventoux, you'll have noticed that cycling attire has taken a turn for the fashionable. Indeed, the term 'cycling attire' is rather misleading, because much of what you see these days is not cycling clothing per se, but rather very chic clothing made to cycle in: a pedantic difference, but a massive one all the same.

Cyclists have always carved out their own niche when it comes to style (think of the Victorians' specially adapted tweed breeks and cycling suits) but in recent years, brands such as Rapha have created high-performance wear that would not be out of place in a shop window on New Bond Street.

The move away from skintight Lycra covered in sponsors' logos to more normal looking attire is not so much a trend any more as the status quo, and let's face it, who doesn't want to look awesome on two wheels? So, we've put together five looks for the rider who wants their clothing to look as good off the bike as it is functional on it.



Commute to the office

With many offices providing shower facilities these days, leaving your suit at work and a couple of nicely pressed shirts at the local dry cleaner makes the two-wheeled commute a breeze. That said, turning up to the office looking like a shower of the proverbial or a day-glo activist isn't going to go down well with your seniors. We've selected some office-appropriate kit with a smart tailored edge so you'll always look sharp.



Having cycling kit that can double up as smart work attire means pre-office commitments needn't be conducted in a wet t-shirt and Lycra shorts

1 Brooks Pickwick bag £165

This canvas rolltop rucksack by Brooks is the perfect option for carrying all your work essentials on urban journeys. The water-resistant cotton will see you good through a rain shower, while the Italian leather details make it a sophisticated carry-all for cruising the city's more refined quarters. brooksengland.com

2 Rapha Cutter's shirt £95

Made from cotton blended with a super-quick-drying performance fabric, Rapha's Cutter's shirt is a smart piece of textile innovation. Cut slim and fitted in a semi-tailored style with hidden placket and French-style collar, it's just as easily worn with a suit as it is under a merino pullover with jeans. rapha.cc

3 Giro Ambient City gloves £60

When the weather takes a turn for the worse (as it is apt to do in the UK) a pair of gloves are the commuter's best friend. These ones by Giro have a life beyond the handlebars – the ridiculously soft Pittards leather exterior and moto-inspired design make them perfect for wearing with a smart overcoat too. giro.com

4 Vulpine x Oliver Spencer Barragan Jacket £310

British designer and keen cyclist Oliver Spencer has joined up with Vulpine for this beautiful field jacket. It features hi-vis strips under the collar and cuffs and at the vent in the rear. The cotton-nylon blend is crease-proof and water-resistant. vulpine.cc

5 Swrve trousers £85

Swrve is just a small sprocket in the big cycling machine, but its products are thoughtfully constructed for the urban cyclist. These trousers can be dressed up with a blazer for a meeting and boast a seamless crotch, reinforced triple stitching, a higher waist, and are water- and wind-repellent. swrve.co.uk





Heading out to meet friends

Whether you're meeting friends at a smart restaurant or a bar for a few summer sharpeners, you don't want cycling kit that's going to make you stand out from the crowd like a chafed leg. Instead, you want outstanding performance clothing that can hold its own in environs that demand snappiness of dress. Thankfully, there are plenty of options for the smart-casual rider to look presentable without compromising his ride.



Stylishly contemporary kit in high-quality natural fabrics negates the need to carry a change of clothes everywhere you go



1 Rapha Cima Cap £30

Practically, a cycling cap protects the eyes rain, sweat and sun glare, although they're mostly worn to indicate to other riders that we're 'a bit pro.' This Rapha cap is made from 100% breathable cotton with anti-bacterial tape with a classic 'Cima Coppi' screen-printed pattern for extra kudos.
rapha.cc

2 Vélobici Milano crew-neck £145

Made from 100% superfine organic merino wool, Vélobici's crew-neck sweater is free of internal seams to prevent unnecessary rubbing. It's only the thumb-hole sleeve cuffs and rear pocket that mark it out as cycling specific, otherwise, no one would ever know.
velobici.cc

3 Rapha Randonnée shorts £90

If the sun's out, let your pins follow suit, particularly if you're the proud owner of these Rapha shorts. Cut slim from a breathable fabric, the Randonnée are tailored with a flat front, high back and revealable hi-vis tabs. They're also crease-resistant.
rapha.cc

4 PedalEd Saddle packable jacket £165

Founded in Japan, PedalEd has been handcrafting riding garb since 2007. Its packable jacket in a cotton-nylon blend features a 'self-cleaning' NanoSphere coating. Throw it on over a simple crew-neck or dress it up with a polo shirt.
pedaled.com

5 Vulpine Jinzū raw selvedge cycling jeans £159

Vulpine went all the way to the Jinzū River in Japan's Toyama Prefecture to source the high-quality denim for its jeans. Once you've ridden out the stiffness of the raw selvedge, mark our words – these very comfortable jeans will be your go-to option off the bike as well.
vulpine.cc



Changeable weather

It's all well and good rocking a beautifully fitted merino wool jersey and cotton riding chinos on days when the sun is with chapeau, but if the heavens suddenly open and all you do is whip out a battered old pack-a-mac, your stylish efforts are all for naught. Advancements in technical fabrications means that cycling-specific outerwear is no longer the shapeless tarpaulin it used to be. Meet the latest sophisticated pieces to fend off the elements.



Outerwear needn't be boring - this highly functional kit can also double up as off-the-bike rainwear, saving you the hassle and money of buying separate items

1 Café Du Cycliste Edith T-shirt £64

When the mercury rises, ditch the base layer and reach for Café Du Cycliste's Edith tee. It's made of merino so has all the functionality of a base layer, plus a zipped back pocket for valuables. Throw a linen-blend sports jacket over it for a smart-casual summer look. cafeducycliste.com

2 Rapha Musette £45

The Rapha Musette is a stylish twist on the classic feed bag. It's water-resistant and features a recessed zip with a heavy-duty leather puller for easy adjustments while you ride. It's large enough for a tablet or small laptop and looks as slick worn off the bike as it does when you're ripping it up on the roads. rapha.cc

3 Giro insulation vest £130

While the 25g of Primaloft Sport Insulation make this light and packable, it also features a hidden stowaway pocket at the rear so you can hide your energy gels/contraband/phone without ruining your shape from the front. When there's a bite to the air, an insulation vest is a lightweight and stylish option. giro.com

4 Café Du Cycliste Cosette base layer £56

In changeable conditions, a good base layer is key. Café Du Cycliste's merino version is an amazing temperature regulator, providing both insulation and breathability. With flat-lock seams for comfort, it's the most complete and best-looking base layer we've seen in ages. cafeducycliste.com

5 Vulpine rain trousers £139

The last thing you want be wearing on your bike when the storm clouds start venting is a pair of heavy 14oz denim jeans. Vulpine has thankfully come up with these sleek rain trousers made from highly water-resistant Epic Cotton with articulated knees. They're like ninja chinos. vulpine.cc



The city runaround

Female cyclists could rightly feel aggrieved that the two-wheeled apparel market has not given them equal consideration in recent times, but that imbalance appears to have levelled out given the host of stylish options on the market now. Feminine, stylish and with performance and comfort in mind, we've found chic kit for the casual rider or city commuter. Say goodbye to the ugly and unflattering, and welcome in a new genre of cycling sophistication.



The combination of temperature-regulating natural fibres and technical fabrics means you'll never turn up looking flustered or needing to change into something smarter



1 Vulpine women's pac £99

Stylish outerwear is not easy to come by for the female cyclist but Vulpine has come up trumps with its packable disc jacket. It's indispensable for British weather and is almost half the weight of an iPhone 6. The ripstop NanoSphere fabric is deployed in a flick of the wrist and keeps you dry in the rain. vulpine.cc

2 Rapha turn-up shorts £80

'Casual cycling shorts for women' are five words you probably haven't read in your life and anyway, you almost certainly haven't seen any of this good. Rapha's turned-up variety have a high-cut waist to protect your modesty. Goodbye unflattering billowy wind socks, hello slim, pleated chino shorts. rapha.cc

3 Rapha sleeveless shirt £90

Summer riding doesn't get more chic or practical than Rapha's sleeveless shirt. The signature hidden placket is a nice touch, while the merino back ensures that your exertion in the saddle doesn't result in sweat patches. More proof that function doesn't have to compromise style. rapha.cc

4 Brooks Piccadilly backpack £245

There are backpacks that you stuff paraphernalia in during weekend jaunts and then there are minimal leather rucksacks that add an extra element of sophistication and élan to the outfit you're wearing. You are looking at a perfect example of the latter. brooksengland.com

5 Rapha Women's jeans £150

Skinny jeans you can cycle in? Believe it. Rapha has achieved the impossible – a pair of denim-blend high-rise jeans that look as good as they ride. A quick roll up of the leg reveals hi-viz piping too. Put away your J Brands because you honestly won't find a more comfortable pair of slim-fitting jeans. rapha.cc



Weekend warrior

A busy social schedule at the weekend, cycling from place to place, demands that you look good despite your exertions in the saddle. This means finding stylish clobber that will also perform at the very highest level. Thankfully, apparel brands have been on the money in recent years, designing highly functional kit that will keep your temperature regulated, protect you from the elements, and look dapper both on and off the bike at the same time.

Being prepared doesn't mean hauling around more clothes – today's incredibly lightweight technical fabrics pack more than enough style to be worn on their own merits



1 Giro Sutton helmet £66

With urban helmet aesthetics so much improved from a decade ago, looks are not an excuse to ride unlidged. Giro's Sutton helmet is as safe, comfortable and well-ventilated as it is stylish. A specially reinforced vent also doubles as a U-lock port so you can lock it to your bike rather than lug it around. giro.com

2 Ted Baker GOGOGO polo £58

Ted Baker has been plumbing a fine line in cycling gear, as evidenced by this classic polo with riding-specific twists: the antibacterial cotton, the reinforced placket, the wheel-engraved buttons and contrast trims, and most importantly, the longer seat so your backside isn't treated to the scenic view. tedbaker.com

3 De Marchi light chinos slim shorts £85

Italian brand De Marchi has been making beautifully dapper cycling attire since 1946. With its durable stretch nylon construction and slim fit, these chinos are an excellent option for busy weekends. Great with a simple tee and a pair of casual loafers, bike or no bike. demarchi.com

4 Vélobici Bouchon jacket £160

When you've got miles to cover on a busy social weekend, you want to be protected from the elements but you don't want to be hauling unnecessary weight. The answer is this jacket: made from more trademarked technical fabrics than you can shake a stick at. velobici.cc

5 Brooks Islington bag £240

A Tesco bag dangling from a handlebar rather undermines your enterprise. This bag is made from waterproof cotton and Italian leather, so it won't look out of place in the smartest of offices. The straps can also be configured diagonally across the chest for extra stability while riding. brooksgotland.com

TEAM BUILDING

We spent a few days in Majorca with Madison-Genesis to find out how they run a typical training camp and what you can take from it to improve your own riding

WORDS **MARK BAILEY** PHOTOGRAPHY **DUNCAN ELLIOTT**



Outside of the racing season, Majorca makes a perfect training base for many pro teams, including Britain's first Madison-Genesis



Is BikesEtc's man good enough to join Madison-Genesis? The wry smiles say it all

If you've ever wondered how long you would last on a training ride with a professional cycling team, the answer is 30 minutes and 11 seconds. That's how long it takes this particular *BikesEtc* scribe to be shattered to pieces during a 'relaxed roll-out' with the Madison-Genesis pro cycling team in Majorca, which rapidly morphs into the time trial from hell.

As we scorch through the roads out of Playa de Muro – a popular training base on the Spanish island which has become a modern Mecca for cyclists – the group's speed creeps up from 20 to 30 to 40kmh, and ever higher, until my heart rate begins to mimic a goregrind drumbeat. Riders arrow past me like darting Spitfires. I start frothing at the mouth like a poisoned Bond villain. I resolve to wave the white flag as soon as my Garmin hit 30 minutes. (Those final 11 seconds are simply how long it takes

me to slow to a halt from the frenzied pace, despite yanking hard on both brakes.)

Madison-Genesis's team manager Roger Hammond, the experienced British former pro and two-time national road race champion, comes to the rescue, escorting me into the back of his team car and checking my vital signs as my laboured breathing and overheating body steam up every window of his car. And we haven't even reached the climbs.

WORLD CLASS

'The boys have been going hard all week now,' Hammond tells me. 'We've got some races coming up and they're all keen to get stuck in. On camps like this, they have the chance to really focus on their training and get in some quality sessions in a different environment with good climbs and good weather. By the end, they'll be flying.'





'TRAINING WITH THE OTHER GUYS KEEPS IT COMPETITIVE'

I dread to think what it would be like to ride with them in that condition. But camps like this are a key part of the training calendar of teams like Madison-Genesis – who compete at UCI Continental level (two rungs below the top WorldTeam level) in events such as the Tour of Britain – alongside the likes of Team Sky, Movistar and BMC. Training camps are also increasingly popular with amateur riders looking to enjoy a holiday and get in shape for the sportive season at the same time. Tenerife, Girona, Lanzarote, Gran Canaria and Nice are popular, but Majorca has long been the base for British riders and teams.

'We can do proper training out here on quiet roads without distractions,' says Tom Scully, a 25-year-old New Zealander who rides for Madison-Genesis and won the 2014 Commonwealth Games points race. 'Training with the other guys keeps it competitive too, because we always push each other on to new levels and have fun. Everybody is doing different things on the same day: some are doing maximum efforts on climbs while others just spin up them, but we all ride out together.'

PLAN YOUR BREAK

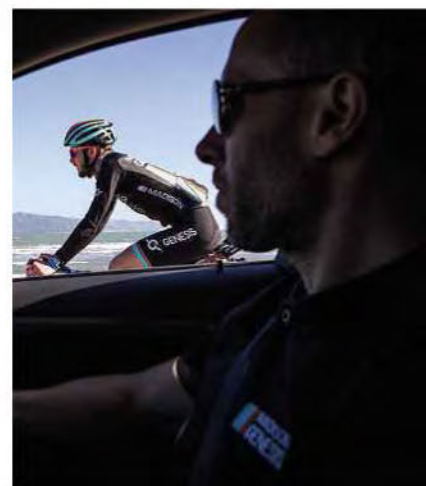
Seeing professional riders train up close provides a fascinating insight into the methods they use to enhance their fitness and performance. But the central theme – and one which any rider can learn from – is that pro riders know exactly what they need

to do to meet the challenges ahead and adapt their training accordingly. There is no one-size-fits-all solution for riders.

'You have to train for the specifics of the event,' says experienced 27-year-old Liam Holohan, who has been doing five-minute ascending power sessions to improve his climbing speed. 'Look at the course of your sportive or race and work backwards. If you know you need to do six sharp climbs, build them into your training.'

Meanwhile, 18-year-old youngster Joe Evans is happy to focus on his stamina with a series of long endurance rides during the week. 'This is my first time in Majorca – I'm used to riding 10-minute climbs back home, not 40-minute climbs – so I'm going steady to ensure I can train all week and build my endurance, rather than riding around like a nutter for one day,' he says.

Back at the hotel, the riders' dedication is obvious. The team tuck into a healthy feast of energy-releasing oats in the morning, nutrient-rich fruit and vegetables after training to enhance recovery, muscle-repairing protein sources such as salmon and beef combined with energy-giving carbs like rice in the evening, plus chunks of nitrate-rich beetroot which is believed to help improve oxygen delivery to the muscles. Holohan has to stare longingly at the dessert table to maintain his trim 56kg frame. 'I'm a climber so I have to be strict,' he says. 'It's the bane



of my life. After the Tour of Britain, I always stop at the services on the way home and eat 12 Krispy Kreme doughnuts. It's my special treat.'

Details matter to professional riders. Erick Rowsell – the 24-year-old brother of Olympic team pursuit gold medal winner Jo Rowsell and the 2015 Tour of the Reservoir champion – pulls on compression socks after every training session to optimise his muscle recovery. Nineteen-year-old Tristan Robbins, the 2014 junior national road race champion, downs an SIS Rego Rapid Recovery shake within minutes of finishing his training rides. Scully lays out his kit every night to ensure he never gets delayed in the morning. And Holohan even brings his own breakfast oats from the UK, in case the team hotel doesn't serve them.

BUILD STRUCTURE

But the Madison-Genesis athletes aren't robots, and they provide a refreshing insight into how they keep themselves sane, despite pursuing superhuman levels of fitness. 'We got stuck into some chocolate on the rest day,' admits Scully. Robbins was happy to tuck into a bowl of Coco Pops this morning because he felt he needed a break from the training diet. 'I'm normally good with my food but it's OK to treat yourself,' he says. 'I burnt 6,500 calories the other day. Training is grim and I can't eat muesli every day.'

During the training camp, the cyclists employ a powerful mix of scientific training methods and old-school techniques. Today, Rowsell has been specifically training at his threshold – the 'sweet spot' at which exercise intensity shifts from aerobic (with oxygen) to anaerobic (without oxygen) – to help reach new levels of fitness. But on other days, he's happy to just ride in a bigger gear to help build strength in his legs.

'We want riders to train with structure but not to get too caught up in it,' explains Hammond. 'We like them to record training data because it gives them accountability and shows them how they're progressing, but they have to ride on feel as well. I want the guys to explore their capabilities and see how far they can go.'



Above & top: riders prepare for training, checking bikes and topping up bidons with energy drink. Opposite: team manager Roger Hammond gives a mid-ride tactical talk, and (below left) shouts instructions from the team car

CARRY ON CAMPING

You don't have to travel to foreign climbs to reap the rewards of a training camp. Add pro knowledge to your cycling at home



CLIMB EASIER

'In Majorca, we do long climbs for 30 minutes to train the sustained power you need for climbing,' says Joe Evans. 'But if you have shorter climbs nearby, do hill repeats. Find a 10-minute climb and do three reps: you'll learn how to sustain a good tempo, find the right cadence and recover better.'



INCREASE POWER

'If you look at all the bikes in our team, the saddles are quite high,' says Tristan Robbins. 'A high saddle helps you generate more power. If it's too low, you end up wrecking your quads. Make sure it's comfy – it shouldn't be painful. It's an easy fix to get more power for less energy.'



GET FREE SPEED

'A lot of amateur riders would really benefit from focusing on their bike position,' says Evans. 'Keep your arms tucked in, with a closer gap between your head and your hands, and ensure your elbows don't stick out.' Don't let any loose clothing make things harder for you either.



SAVE ENERGY

'If you want to avoid wasting energy by wobbling around, you need to do core work,' says Erick Rowsell. 'Twice a week I use a Swiss ball to do exercises such as sit-ups, planks, squats, oblique twists and leg raises. It's really easy to do at home but makes a big impact.'



FEED YOUR EFFORTS


'A big mistake people make is to eat the right foods but in the wrong portions,' warns Liam Holohan. 'A meal you think might contain 600 calories could contain 1,200 calories if you don't watch portion sizes. Just keep an eye on how much you pile on your plate. Climbing gets much easier if you're light.'

After the riders finish training, it's time to put their feet up and relax. Whether it's sipping coffee in the hotel bar or strolling along the beach, recovery time is a vital part of training. 'You don't improve when you train; you improve when you recover,' explains Holohan. 'The training itself just damages your muscles. Your recovery time is when your muscles are adapting and your body is rebuilding.'

It's something a lot of amateur cyclists neglect when trying to balance training and other commitments. 'Listen to your body and look out for signs of fatigue, irritability or illness as that normally means you're too worn down and you're effectively negating all your effort in training,' says Holohan.

During their down time, all riders follow their own personal methods of mental and physical

recovery. Holohan spent his free time in Majorca reading the book *Faster* by the former pro cyclist Michael Hutchinson and watching Keanu Reeves flick *John Wick* with his roommate. Rowsell walks around in compression socks, which improve blood flow to the muscles to flush away the lactate caused by intense exercise. For the same reason, Evans likes to lie down on his bed and keep his feet up off the ground for a few hours. Scully, meanwhile, chills out by watching Colin Farrell's dark comedy *In Bruges*.

Other riders just play games on their iPads, Skype family or partners, or sit and chat in the hotel café. 'When you're recovering, it's good to just switch your mind off, chill out with the lads and relax,' says Evans. 'It looks like we're not doing much, but it's as easy to over-train as it is to under-train.' 

HOME COACHING

Transform your commute or Sunday ride with these hour-long pro training camp sessions

Improved strength

WHAT 'One of the best ways to improve your performance is to do "over and under" threshold work,' says Erick Rowsell. 'That means working at just over and just under the top effort you can normally sustain for 20 minutes.'

WHY By training at that specific intensity, you push the limits of how hard you can train and increase your performance level so you feel stronger and fitter. It also helps you make big efforts during a race. But the benefits aren't just for pros chasing breaks and making attacks. This session will also condition you to blast up climbs, catch up with the group of riders ahead, and conquer any short, sharp surprises on your next sportive.

HOW 'Find somewhere you can do an all-out effort for 20 minutes and check your average heart rate or power during that period. Then take away 5% and you have your Functional

Threshold Power (FTP) or Lactate Threshold (LT) – the effort you should be able to sustain for an hour. You can do training sessions at just under or over this to train your body to perform at a higher level.'

Quality threshold sessions include:

- A 60-minute ride with 2 x 20-minute efforts at your FTP or LT, during which you repeatedly dip over and under the threshold.
- A 45-minute ride with 1 x 30-minute effort at your FTP or LT. During the middle 10 minutes, perform 10 x 30-second efforts at 130% of your threshold followed by 30-second recovery periods at 80% of your threshold.
- A 60-minute session with a middle block of 4 x 6-minute efforts at 110% of your threshold, separated by 4-minute recovery periods at 80% of your threshold.



Increased fitness

WHAT 'When I'm looking to boost my overall fitness, one of my favourite sessions is the "zone three" efforts,' says Rowsell. 'For me, it means efforts of medium intensity that are a bit harder than I'd normally like.'

WHY 'A lot of people make the mistake of just riding around at a comfortable pace but when you train at slightly higher intensity, you're actively building your stamina and fitness.'

HOW 'For most riders, zone three will equate to a heart rate of about 150-160bpm, so you're working hard but not killing yourself,' explains Rowsell. 'During a two or three-hour spin, aim to do three 20-minute efforts at that zone-three intensity.' It's important to sustain the effort for the full 20 minutes, so start where you won't be distracted by busy traffic or junctions.

60
minute
sessions

Instant speed

WHAT 'Russian Steps are a really good training drill for sharpening up your peak fitness and form,' says Joe Evans. 'The session involves a series of efforts but with recovery periods of different length.'

WHY 'These drills help you prepare for short efforts and quick turns of pace when you're out on the road,' says Evans. 'Because the efforts are quite mixed up, it forces your body to adapt and develop.' This programme is also a great way to boost your fitness quickly.

HOW 'You can adapt the session each time but the basic method is: 15-second sprint, 45-second recovery, 30-second sprint, 30-second recovery, 45-second sprint, 15-second recovery, 60-second sprint, 60-second recovery, 45-second sprint, 15-second recovery, 30-second sprint, 30-second recovery, 15-second sprint, 45-second recovery. Give yourself a five-minute rest, then try again. If you can do 2-3 blocks in an hour, you'll find it really tough but rewarding.'



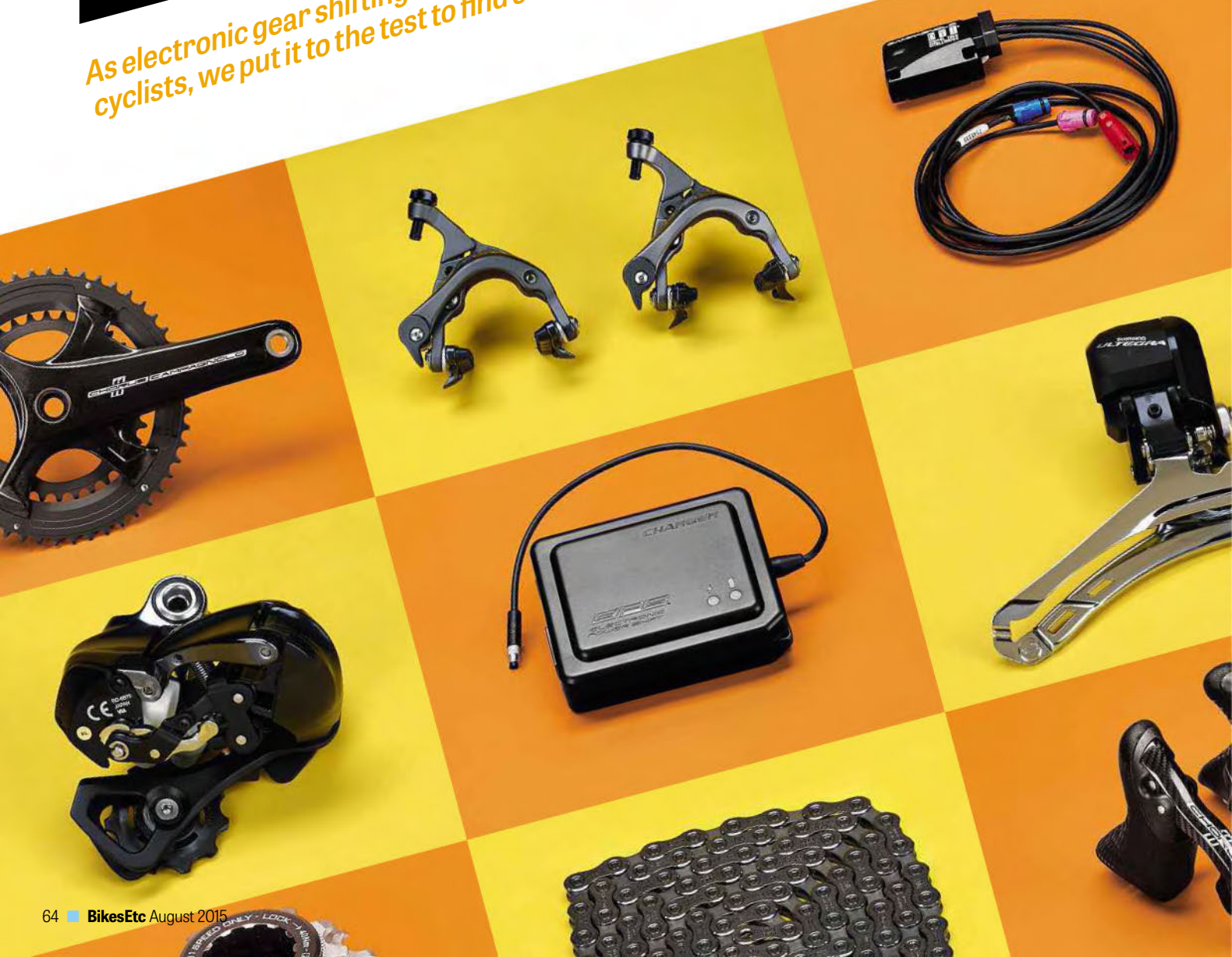
'BREAKS ARE ESSENTIAL – IT'S AS EASY TO OVER-TRAIN AS IT IS TO UNDER-TRAIN'



Top & left: Majorca's climbs, including the famous Sa Calobra, are ideal for hill training. Above: post-ride stretches are vital for quick muscle recovery

The future's ELECTRIC

As electronic gear shifting becomes more accessible to everyday cyclists, we put it to the test to find out if it's time to upgrade





W

ith computers finding their way into everything from cars to fridges, it was only a matter of time until they relieved us of the burden of shifting the gears on our bicycles. But why would you want to give up control of your derailleurs

and entrust it to a machine mind of processors, switches and servomotors?

The principle behind electronic groupsets is simple: instead of a cable under tension, a signal wire passes the information from switches in the shifters to motors in the derailleurs. With control taken out of your clumsy hands, there's much less chance of mis-shifts, while the lack of cables to stretch or wear out means shifting remains consistent regardless of the conditions.

Requiring nothing more than a pair of micro switches to shift gears, these buttons don't have to be restricted to the conventional position, allowing shifting from multiple locations on the bars – additional shift buttons on the drops are especially popular among sprinters. The smaller space required has also freed up room for yet more technology, such as the fluid reservoirs necessary for hydraulic disc brakes.

Cable-operated gears were invented in 1938, so riders have had a long time to familiarize themselves with that system. As with any new technology, it's hard to overcome the fear that the new way of doing things will add needless complication to a system that most riders were both happy to use and able to service themselves. In reality, once initial installation is complete, electronic

gears require little maintenance beyond plugging your bike in to recharge every thousand miles or so.

Much like the increasing level of computer integration in cars, the switch to electronic gears has made the user's experience simpler while simultaneously robbing them of the ability to service the parts themselves. However, with the reliability and service life of both Shimano and Campagnolo systems proving to be excellent, this is largely a non-issue.

ZAP TO THE FUTURE

While electronic gearing might seem like a modern phenomenon, its development has been over 20 years in the making. French manufacturer Mavic released an electronic groupset called Zap back in 1992. Although much maligned, it was actually fairly reliable and years ahead of its time, working in much the same way as today's designs. Used by numerous pro teams throughout the

Electronics open up radical new possibilities in the way we control gears

early '90s, it even gained the approval of the ultra fastidious Chris Boardman, whose attention to detail earned him the nickname The Professor.

Sadly, a supposedly 'upgraded' and wireless version of Zap proved to be

unreliable and effectively killed off the use of electronic gears by the end of the decade. With Mavic having crashed out of the groupset arena, the torch was passed on to Campagnolo and Shimano.

Mavic's foray into electronics certainly hadn't gone unnoticed by the big two remaining component makers and although few prototypes ever surfaced, both were busy behind the scenes developing their own systems. While Campagnolo trialled several systems on the bikes of its sponsored teams, Shimano was the first to market in 2009, with Campy following a couple of years later. Perhaps the greatest legacy of this secret history of development is that when both makers brought their groupsets to market, unlike earlier attempts, the function and reliability were much improved.

Now that most of the pro peloton have had several years' experience of the joys of going electric, the relentless competition between manufacturers is rapidly driving down the cost to consumers. So while mechanically operated gears will still be with us for some time yet, the electronic alternative is increasingly within reach of non-sponsored riders. Mechanically operated shifting still has its fans, though – along with increased cost, current electronic systems are heavier, and in the event of a serious mechanical on the road, can't be bodged for a get-you-home fix in the same way as you can with a traditional derailleur.

SHIFTING PERCEPTIONS

This fact alone means mechanical systems still retain a loyal following in the pro ranks. The final contingent of digital refuseniks are SRAM riders, as the company doesn't yet have an electronic option. However, that looks likely to change in the near future as its own wireless system edges closer to release.

One of the most tantalizing prospects opened up by the adoption of electronic gearing is the possibility to radically change the way our gears are controlled. Shimano's mountain bike system already allows riders to operate both front and



rear derailleurs via a single shifter. This means that rather than shifting up or down to the next sprocket on the cassette while balancing the need to shift between the two front chainrings, the processor will instead calculate the next available ratio, shifting both derailleurs simultaneously. Not only does this take the guesswork out of finding the most efficient gear, it also chooses the best chainline, protecting the entire system from damage.

MIND OVER MATTER

Perhaps the next logical step is to entirely remove the fallible human brain from the equation. American company Bioshift has created a modification for Shimano's Di2 that allows it to shift automatically – a small computer harvests data from cadence, speed and power meters, before working out the most efficient gear for the terrain and shifting robotically. If this sounds like sci-fi, it's nothing compared to the results of a collaboration between bike maker Parlee and Toyota's Prius lab. They have successfully married together a commercially available neuro-headset for measuring brainwaves with an iPhone-based program for wirelessly controlling Shimano's electronic gearing. The resulting hack is a bike

Bioshift has invented a modification that allows automatic gear shifting

that can read the rider's mind and shift gears accordingly – albeit only when on a static roller at present.

While mind-reading bicycles are unlikely to hit the road any time soon, all this futurology does have a point, if only to prove that electronic groupsets have applications beyond extracting money from tech-obsessed cyclists.

As the technology improves and pro-level trickle-down continues, electronic groupsets are only going to become more affordable. But what are they like to live with? We've given the leading two groupsets an extended test to find out. As both Shimano and Campagnolo's electronic groupsets share many components (cassettes, brakes etc) with their mechanical equivalents, we've focused on the electronic-specific components in our review.

Shimano Ultegra Di2

£1,245 madison.co.uk

SHIFTING

The shifting on the latest Ultegra Di2 groupset is superb and unless you're a real weight weenie, there's no reason to upgrade to the Dura-Ace version. Rear shifting is incredibly smooth and the latest updates even allow you to move through several gears at once, just like with mechanical shifting. Front shifting is simply a revelation. The front derailleur uses a powerful worm drive motor that allows you to shift up to the big ring even when you're really hammering on the pedals. It also automatically trims the front derailleur as you go through the cassette, so rattling chains are a thing of the past. Our only gripe is that the shifting buttons are close together and only require a light touch so it can feel a bit vague at times. It's also frustratingly easy to press the shift buttons in error when riding on very bumpy surfaces.



Brakes Weight:	342g
Brake Levers Weight:	304g
Cranksets Weight:	705g
Cassette Weight:	225g
Front Derailleur Weight:	138g
Rear Derailleur Weight:	275g
Cables + Battery Weight:	115g
TOTAL Weight:	2,104g Price £1,245





INSTALLATION

Installing the Di2 system couldn't be easier – no specialist tools are required. Setting it up is easy too, thanks to the Shimano diagnostics tool which, when paired with a computer running the right software, can run you through the whole process start to finish. Additional accessories include climbers' switches and sprinter buttons, as well as the ability to sync the groupset with a Garmin via the D-Fly ANT+ sensor to get gearing and status read outs. The only thing you need to be careful of is ensuring that the front derailleur is set up correctly as a badly adjusted unit will still work but will rapidly drain the battery.

LIVING WITH IT

Most bikes that accept Di2 groupsets will now be set up for internal batteries. The internal battery has a claimed life of up to 1,500 miles but in the real world, we tend to see quite a bit less. It does depend on how often you change gear (and the temperature) but you'll know it's coming as the front derailleur will cut out first. If the whole thing runs out of juice mid-ride, it's a case of riding home in whatever gear you're left in. We've never been caught out ourselves (keep an eye on the battery indicator on the junction box that sits under the stem) but we know plenty of people who have. Charging is via a mini-USB port on the junction box.

Rating

SHIFTING
INSTALLATION
LIVING WITH IT

BikesEtc
**BEST
IN TEST**

OVERALL
9
10



Campagnolo Chorus EPS

£1,962

chickencycles.co.uk/i-ride.co.uk

SHIFTING

Like its mechanical siblings, shifting on Chorus EPS is much more tactile than with Ultegra Di2. The shift buttons have a noticeable click when pressed, and they're on opposite sides of the levers so it's virtually impossible to make an accidental shift. The positioning of the shift buttons is personal preference but the reshaped levers make it much easier to shift from the drops than the old groupsets. Shifting at the back is smooth and very fast (you can go from one end of the cassette to the other in a couple of seconds), but front shifting isn't quite as smooth as Ultegra Di2. It never missed a shift – it just took longer to make the shift when under pressure.



LIVING WITH IT

The EPS battery is a fair bit bigger than that used by Shimano's Di2 and claims to give you up to 2,000km of riding per charge, but unlike Shimano's system, should it all go wrong when you're out riding, you can decouple the rear derailleur and push it into an appropriate gear to get you home – thereby avoiding the potential of a 34x28 twiddle-fest. While Shimano Di2 is USB compatible, Campagnolo uses a proprietary charger, and the port is often in awkward places such as under the bottom bracket, which makes charging the battery more difficult than it needs to be. On the plus side, the interface has a multi-coloured LED that doesn't only tell you the exact status of the battery, but also informs you what is broken if something stops working. Other neat touches include a strap to wrap around the seat tube that turns the system off to prevent damage when travelling.



Brakes Weight: 313g
Brake Levers Weight: 288g
Cranksets Weight: 685g
Cassette Weight: 230g
Front Derailleur Weight: 153g
Rear Derailleur Weight: 229g
Cables + Battery Weight: 181g
TOTAL Weight: 2,079g Price: £1,962

INSTALLATION

Care has to be taken here, as frames that are Di2 compatible are not necessarily EPS compatible for two reasons. First, EPS groupsets require an extra hole in the frame for the charging port, and secondly, the plugs on the wiring are much larger and don't always fit through the wiring holes in frames designed for Di2. The actual installation of the wiring is also considerably fiddlier and a special tool is required to install the battery in the seat tube. While this might not seem an issue when buying a complete bike, if something goes wrong and you need to take it into a shop, the labour charges could quickly rack up. It's also worth mentioning that you should avoid using the shifters at a standstill, as the powerful motor in the rear derailleur can bend the hanger.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF ELECTRONIC GEARS**1992 MAVIC ZAP**

The first electronic derailleur system, Mavic's Zap is the forefather of today's electronic groupsets. Well ahead of its time, it relies on the rider's pedalling motion to shift through its eight sprockets rather than the motors used by modern systems. Two years after its debut, it helps Chris Boardman on his way to victory in what is still the Tour de France's fastest ever prologue time trial.

1994 SACHS SPEEDTRONIC

Little known outside of its native Germany, Sach's Speedtronic system is the first to feature electronically activated internal hub gears. Looking like an elaborate add-on for Nintendo's SNES games console, it requires users enter a code to activate the last six gears, without which bike thieves are forced to spin away in the lowest gear.

1999 MAVIC MEKTRONIC

A cosmetic overhaul, switch to wireless activation and a new digital display fails to rescue what has always been a problematic system. In fact, the shift to wireless contributes to the system's extinction. Unpredictable shifts and heavier batteries means it wins few fans. When Mavic decides to focus purely on wheel manufacturing, the groupset is shelved.

2005 CAMPAGNOLO - THE LOST GROUPSET

Having been tinkering with electronic groupsets since 1992, Campagnolo believes it is ready to launch them on the world, having trialled a 10-speed system with the Iles Balears-Caisse d'Épargne team. However, wet weather puts the team's bikes out of commission, and Campagnolo concentrates instead on creating an 11th sprocket, so the components never make it to market.


2009 SHIMANO DURA-ACE DI2

Having debuted the system on several teams' bikes during the Tour of California, Shimano is the first of the big three to bring an electronic system to non-pro consumers. The company's immense clout combined with the groupset's near faultless operation announces a new electronic age.

2011 CAMPAGNOLO RECORDER EPS

Campagnolo catches up with its great rival, releasing a competitor to Shimano's Di2, although like its mechanical groupsets, it remains a niche product favoured by the cycling cognoscenti.

2015 SRAM PROTOTYPE SPOTTED

Last of the big three to the party, SRAM's prototype is seen at various races throughout early 2015. While SRAM remains tight-lipped, the prototypes, dubbed eTap, look polished, leading to speculation that SRAM will bring the groupset to market early next year. 



OFF THE RACK

Off on a cycling trip? Make sure your bike gets there safely without risking your car's upholstery



Sticking to local roads for training rides is fine for racking up the miles on familiar routes, but when the urge comes to venture further afield, travelling by car might be the only realistic option. At this point, you'll need a bike rack.

Using a cycle rack frees up space inside the car, otherwise taken up by bikes, for vital room that can instead be taken up by clothes, tools, other luggage and even more passengers to come riding. There's more than one type of carrier though, so what's the best? Different types will suit different needs, but we've focused on rear-mounted racks intended for up to three bikes – they might not be the most permanent of solutions but they're generally the cheapest, and convenient for easy fitting.

Saris Bones 3-Bike Transport Rack

£150

The plastic feel of Saris' popular Bones rack might not be for everyone, but after a little configuration of its six straps, you can be sure that the American-made carrier is going to hold firm, even when fully loaded. With its unconventional looks, setting the Bones rack up may be initially confusing, but it's refreshingly

straightforward. The rack's main axis has four main contact points for it to rest on a car's tailgate, and these are set on a plastic spline. Simply add or remove a notch to get the best angle for your car. The Bones holds up to three bikes, with a 45kg limit, which should be plenty for road cyclists. Comes in eight colours.

paligap.cc



Rating

EASE OF FIT
STABILITY
VALUE

OVERALL
8
10



JetBlack 3-Bike Boot Rack

£55

This JetBlack option is the cheapest of all six racks, yet you wouldn't know if the price tag was hidden – this maintains a quality feel, as much as it is lightweight. As a result of its small stature, it feels a little flimsy, but a firm hold can be achieved by making sure it's on properly. It can still hold three bikes, despite its bargain-basement price, though this is down on the weight limit of rivals, at 40kg. Still, three road bikes won't cause problems. This fits high on to the rear of the car, so is less likely to obscure the numberplate than some racks. We liked the rubber padding fitted all over the JetBlack rack, helping to prevent scrapes. chickencycles.co.uk



Rating

EASE OF FIT
STABILITY
VALUE

OVERALL
7
10



Pendle Strap On Rack

£95

Ready to go out of the box, just attach each of its six straps to your car's tailgate. It's small and dinky in size but provides as firm a fit as its rivals. This is good for three bikes weighing up to 45kg in total and is up there with Saris' Bones as one of the best racks with fabric straps – we like its simple design, which lends itself to being truly universal for use on nearly all cars. Its frame-holding arms are adjustable to suit – select how high or low these sit, so as not to have bikes held aloft behind your car. There aren't any individual chocks or holders, but the rack's metal is coated in rubber to avoid potential scrapes or damage, and enough straps are supplied to ensure bikes are secure. pendle-bike.co.uk



Rating

EASE OF FIT
STABILITY
VALUE

OVERALL
7
10

HALO

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BikesEtc May 2015

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KEEP IT LEGAL

A rack makes it incredibly easy to carry your bike by car, but there are one or two legal and practical pitfalls to be wary of...

Bikes bouncing down the dual carriageway behind you is not something anyone wants to see in their rear-view mirror. Nor are blue flashing lights as the police pull you over because your numberplate or lights are obscured.

Luckily, both can easily be avoided, the first by thoroughly

reading the manual to ensure your rack is securely attached. Note that aluminium or glass panels often don't like having clips attached to them, so be careful. You also need to exercise care entering car parks or going under low bridges if your bikes are on the roof.

A lighting board

(£15, roofbox.co.uk) is a legal requirement if the bikes on the back of your car are covering your lights or numberplate. This hangs on the rack and is easily wired in to your car's electrics. It'll also display your registration number, ensuring you receive all due speeding tickets.



Exodus Rear High Mount 3 Cycle Carrier £120

As you close the two main handles to lock this on to a car's boot, you can see it firm up its grip and hug the tailgate tightly. Try to push it around and it feels like an extension of the car – the metal-on-metal contact makes no compromises in ensuring a snug and safe fit. This feels more solid than many of the others. A choice of fitting adaptors is included

with the rack, so after reading the instructions and finding the make and model of your car, the carrier is almost tailor-configured to your vehicle. It takes three bikes easily, and the maximum weight allowance of 45kg won't pose a problem. You'll still be able to open the boot with this clamped on, too.

halfords.com



Rating

EASE OF FIT
STABILITY
VALUE

OVERALL
9
10



Rating

EASE OF FIT

STABILITY

VALUE

OVERALL
6/10

Buzz Rack Beetle

£75

Though Buzz Rack's Beetle didn't give the most secure hold, we were satisfied with its grip and its cheap price can't be ignored. It's meant to be fitted over the rear glass and held on to the tailgate by pressure of the six straps, just like the JetBlack option, but the three-bike carrier felt more secure when resting on our Fiat Panda test car's bumper instead. It gives users options either way, and this is sure to fit on most cars. We were happy with its security and hold once all straps were tight, but achieving the correct tension levels is a frustrating trial-and-error process. Strap adjustment aside, main levers make this a fairly quick fit and the rubber supports feel safe. 

roofbox.co.uk


SeaSucker Mini Bomber

£350

Most of the racks in this test use straps to hook to a car, but SeaSucker's Mini Bomber instead attaches with suction pads. It's safest on the car's roof, though it's also possible to use it on rear windows for a vertical fit – as long as there's a flat and shiny surface, the suction pads will stick. Take the front wheel out of your bike and a skewer holds the fork, while a loop of Velcro ties the bike's rear wheel to the car. An element of trust will have to be invested before letting it hold your bike but we've found it reliable in all driving conditions. It's pricey too, and you'll still have to travel with your front wheel inside the car.

seasucker.com

Rating

EASE OF FIT

STABILITY

VALUE

OVERALL
7/10


Road Elite Link Kits

Look, feel, perform better

Compressionless, Lightweight, Ultra Flexible Performance

This new housing is the ultimate combination of durability and attention grabbing looks. Available in Black, Red, Silver, or Gold, our Link Kit delivers some major benefits. It's compressionless, which means precision shifting, plus it allows for tight bends without kinking during tricky cable runs. It's also 20-50% lighter than traditional housing while being more durable.

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Like composing your own critical notices in the voice of Ned Boulting, donning team kit can be a guilty pleasure. But with the Tour de France now upon us, what better way to show your support for the riders than by pulling on some replica kit? Don't listen to the cycling snobs who tell you it should only be seen on riders actually contracted by the team.

Classic team kits of yesteryear comprised little more than a woollen jersey and shorts with the sponsor's name stitched on or woven in, but the invention of dye sublimation printing in 1983 put the final nail in the coffin of cycling's golden age of style. Free to print as many logos as they liked directly into the material, teams moved away from the previously minimalist style, instead creating the lairy designs that dominated the late '80s and '90s. Luckily, some teams seem to be returning to a less-is-more approach, with this year's designs featuring some potential future classics. And with manufacturers throwing all their expertise at outfitting the teams, it's a good place to look for cutting-edge technology.



Astana (Moa)

Pro Team Replica jersey £60

Pro Team Replica bibshorts £70

Controversy surrounds the Kazakh government-sponsored team after two of its riders tested positive for EPO but that hasn't detracted from the team's enthusiasm for racing, as anyone who watched this year's Giro d'Italia will testify. We're expecting more of the same at the Tour (about to start as we went to press). Like last year's Tour winner and team leader Nibali, the team's kit is born and bred in Italy, manufactured by Moa, but we were underwhelmed by the loose cut, stubby zip and baggy sleeves of the replica jersey. The shorts are equally basic, leaving us feeling more amateur hour than sponsored pro.

raleigh.co.uk

Rating

JERSEY
BIBSHORTS
TEAM CRED

OVERALL

5

10





BMC Racing Team (Pearl Izumi)

Pro LTD Speed jersey **£90** Pro LTD Speed bibshorts **£120**

Big in the early season Classics, the American BMC Racing Team is equally capable of top performances in Grand Tours. Swiss bike manufacturer and team sponsor BMC has partnered with American clothing brand Pearl Izumi to develop its kit. With the team's bikes being famously aerodynamic, Pearl Izumi spent time in the wind tunnel to ensure its clothing is low drag. It definitely shows in the contour-hugging fit of the jersey, which has a wrinkle-free cut and snug cuffs to keep wind resistance low. The wind-cheating

dimpled fabric on the sleeves extends to the shorts, which feature secure, oversized grippers on the cuffs. madison.co.uk

Rating

JERSEY
BIBSHORTS
TEAM CRED

OVERALL
8/10



Orica GreenEdge (Craft)

Craft Orica GreenEdge Replica jersey **£60**
Craft Orica GreenEdge Replica bibshorts **£68**

Home to ex-Australian road race champ Simon Gerrans, who had to relinquish his national jersey (shown here) earlier this year. The kit comes from the opposite side of the world, from Swedish brand Craft, famous for its mountain sports clothing. We've always been impressed by its budget-conscious designs. Technology wise, there's not a lot going on with the jersey, which is baggy enough to flap in the wind and lacks many of the traits we've come to associate with high-end race kit. The shorts pack in far more features, with a multi-panel, multi-density chamois and flush, aero-looking cuffs. They're comfy and great value. craft.se



Rating

JERSEY
BIBSHORTS
TEAM CRED

OVERALL
7/10

Movistar (Endura)

Movistar jersey **£60**
Movistar Team Issue bibshorts **£75**

Scottish brand Endura scored a major coup in becoming outfitter to Spanish mega team Movistar. Having produced what was briefly the world's fastest skinsuit for Alex Dowsett's Hour record, its focus will now be on keeping Nairo Quintana's bottom happy on the Tour with its 800 series chamois pad, its aerated and dimpled construction claiming to 'massage' your posterior. Despite the low cost, this kit is the exact same as the one issued to the team, which is obvious from the second you pull it on. Its aero fit sits close on the chest, and the raw capped sleeves and cuffs scream speed. Pro treatment at privateer prices. endurasport.com

Rating

JERSEY
BIBSHORTS
TEAM CRED

OVERALL
9/10





Etixx-QuickStep (Vermarc)

Etixx-QuickStep jersey **£57** Etixx-QuickStep bibshorts **£84**

This European Classics squad is home to Manxman Mark Cavendish, who should be in the mix come the sprint stages. The Belgians love their cycling and don't seem to feel the need to give it a trendy makeover – most kit is emblazoned with logos for products like flooring or farm equipment. Vermarc produces around 400 team kits each year and its no-nonsense designs tend to be as tough as the riders they clothe. This replica kit is another case of shorts for athletes – they're from Vermarc's excellent PRR range – and a top that is more

of a fan's item. Its basic design, generous fit and low cost make it perfect for cheering from the roadside. chickencyclekit.co.uk

Rating

JERSEY
BIBSHORTS
TEAM CRED

OVERALL
7
10



NO ROMANCE WITHOUT FINANCE

Football fans can yearn for an age when teams were populated by local players and the naming rights to their stadiums had yet to be sold off to global corporations. By comparison, cycling has always been shamelessly mercenary. Mention Molteni to a cycling fan and they're likely to babble on about the great Eddy Merckx, who won

the Tour three times as a Molteni team rider, while older Italians are more likely to remember the brand for its pork products. Over the years, teams have been used to flog everything from hearing aids (Phonak) to steam cleaners (Polti). Even the Tour de France was begun as a ruse to prop up sales of French newspaper *L'Auto*.



Tinkoff-Saxo (Sportful)

Tinkoff-Saxo Race jersey **£90** Tinkoff-Saxo BodyFit Pro bibshorts **£90**

Russian business whizz Oleg Tinkoff was tickled pink when Alberto Contador won the Giro – so much so that he dyed his hair to match the maglia rosa. Will he be dying his hair yellow come the Tour's final stage? Winning in France will be a difficult prospect. With five different jerseys available to the team, we picked its default choice, the Race, with features such as raw-edged sleeves and a very breathable and quick-drying material. While the BodyFit Pro shorts are not top of the range, they're very comfy, with compression fit, dense padding

and fully pro radio pocket on the back. In fact, we like them so much, we use them for our own *BikesEtc* team kit. sportful.com

Rating

JERSEY
BIBSHORTS
TEAM CRED

OVERALL
8/10

Team Sky (Rapha)

Team Sky Pro jersey **£120**

Team Sky Pro bibshorts **£190**

Beloved in Britain but universally grumbled about on the continent, no other team is as single-minded as Sky. With private motor homes (briefly), a huge budget and team cars from Jaguar, boutique clothing manufacturer Rapha is a natural fit. Owner Simon Mottram explains, 'Sky were looking for someone who would concentrate on them, a real partner. For Adidas [Sky's previous kit supplier], cycling was only one of a hundred sports.' The result is a pro team range designed around the squad, something that no doubt appealed to marginal gains-obsessed director Sir David Brailsford. Supremely comfy, the bibshorts have long been among our favourites, while the jersey's flat-fronted fit is impeccable. Non-team equivalents come in stylish block colours.

rapha.cc

Rating

JERSEY
BIBSHORTS
TEAM CRED

OVERALL
8/10



BikesEtc
**BEST
IN TEST**



Trek Factory Racing (Bontrager)

Trek Factory Racing RSL Pro jersey **£130**

Trek Factory Racing RSL Pro Road bibshorts **£150**

One of three teams with a bicycle brand as a headline sponsor, Trek Factory Racing draws its riders from across the world. With few prospects for the general classification, look out for Swiss hardman Fabian Cancellara to try to nab some early stages. Trek's in-house brand Bontrager supplies the team's monochrome pinstriped kit. Pulling it on, we felt ready to tackle a Grand Tour – it really has a magic pro quality. The true race cut, flat seams and silky fabric give nothing away. Superbly comfortable and very aerodynamic, this is among the nicest kit we've tried. 

trekbikes.com

Rating

JERSEY
BIBSHORTS
TEAM CRED

OVERALL
9/10



FRESHEN UP

Not just for festivals and dirty stop-outs, these dry shower products can help you stay fresh when there's no bathroom available

☐ Squeezing in bike rides at every possible opportunity is guaranteed to make your life better. Unfortunately, unlike Paris-Roubaix, not every one of these rides can end in the showers, which can be a problem – particularly for anyone you might have to share a space with. Your colleagues are unlikely to be as thrilled as you at the Strava KOM you bagged on your ride to work if you spend the rest of the day stinking up the office. If you haven't got the time or shower facilities, these 11 products can help you freshen up post-ride.



OVERALL
8/10

Pits & Bits Towel Off Body Wash

£2.49 65ml

Splash this stuff on and rub it in – it froths up into a soapy lather which you towel off. It does a good job of neutralising bodily aromas and lives up to its claim of leaving no sticky residue.

traveloutdoors.co.uk



OVERALL
8/10

Secret Training Post-Race Wash

£6 250ml

A spritzable bottle makes this pleasantly cooling. Scrub off for maximum cleaning or let it dry naturally. Leaves skin feeling fresh and smelling of peppermint and eucalyptus.

i-ride.co.uk



OVERALL
6/10

RockFace Active Body Spray

£3.49 150ml

Not really a cleaner but good for a quick freshen up, this isn't an anti-perspirant, so won't stop you sweating but will make you smell nice. Don't go too mad though; no one in the office likes the smell of a boy's locker room.

rockface4men.co.uk



OVERALL
8/10

Equip+ Super-Thick Wash Mitts

£2.29 pack of 4

More like pockets of moisture than five-fingered mitts, this four-pack of wipes is perfect for giving yourself a good scrub down. Doing away with the need for a separate towel, the evidence of their effectiveness is plain to see. No posh fragrances, just top cleaning.

equipwaterlesswash.com



OVERALL
9/10

Chapeau N'eau Shower Gel

£9 250ml

The initial eye-wateringly alcoholic aroma of this no-water shower gel gives way to the smell of peppermint, lavender and bergamot, leaving the skin pleasantly tingly while also helping to strip away chamois cream and embrocation. velobrands.co.uk

Secret Training Hygiene Wipes

£2.50 pack of 25

Twenty-five wet wipes to help you scrub up after exercise. Good for dealing with dirt and grime, but don't expect any boutique fragrance. Flushable, but we'd avoid doing so in case it contributes to the epidemic of fat bergs clogging our sewers. i-ride.co.uk



OVERALL
6/10

Below The Belt Waterless Shower

£6.95 100ml

Designed to help you freshen up your most crucial areas when there's no time for a shower. With its menthol fragrance and cool, tingling sensation, you'll quickly get over any bashfulness about buying something purely to rub on your nether regions. btbgrooming.co.uk

OVERALL
9/10



OVERALL
8/10

Nilaqua Towel Off Body Wash

£2.49 65ml

No essential oils or essences of rare plants here. Once rubbed on, the lightly foaming formula is best wiped off, taking with it an impressive amount of grime. traveloutdoors.co.uk

Muc-Off Dry Shower

£7 200ml

Dispensing a shot of foam that can be left on or towelled off, this product's cleaning power is derived from coconuts rather than alcohol. Smells tropical, but lacks the grease-stripping abilities of harsher formulas. muc-off.com

OVERALL
7/10



OVERALL
6/10

H2NO Waterless Body Wash

£2.49 150ml

An all-purpose cleaner developed by sixth formers. The pump struggled to dispense the liquid fast enough before evaporating, leaving us a bit sticky, but neutralises smells. traveloutdoors.co.uk



OVERALL
7/10

Below The Belt Fresh & Dry Balls

£6.95 75ml

Groin confidence can make or break any business relationship. Applied like deodorant but safe for your most delicate parts, it dries to leave a fine, talc-like dusting. Nice smelling, but no match for hours in the saddle. btbgrooming.co.uk





STAND AND DELIVER

Expert or amateur, a proper workstand is a workshop essential and will make servicing your bike less of a chore



Yes, they can be big and expensive, but use a proper workstand once and you'll wonder how you ever managed without one. Holding the bike securely off the ground, they'll free up your arms to attend to the job at hand, making repairs far easier. But which to choose – bottom bracket-mounted or tube

clamping? And how much to invest? If you have the luxury of space, a larger stand can provide added stability, while more compact stands will pack down better, saving you space at home and making it easier to transport them to races or events. We tried seven to help you pick the one that's right for you.

Park Tool PCS10 Home Mechanic Stand £150

This big blue workstand is the largest on test, so it might not be the best option if you live in a small flat. However, if you've got the space, the lanky legs give it excellent stability. It's a weighty beast too, thanks to its steel construction, but this also helps prevent it flexing during use, making it well worth the extra effort required to lug it into position. One-handed adjustment of the clamp is

easy. Hard rubber shims in the clamp do a decent job of stopping the bike sliding about and are replaceable should you manage to wear them out. Park Tool makes a range of accessories that can be added to the stand, including a tool tray and rudimentary wheel-truing gauge, meaning that this stand can grow along with your mechanical expertise.

madison.co.uk



Rating

STABILITY
CONSTRUCTION
CLAMP DESIGN

OVERALL
8/10

Lifeline Professional Workstand

£75

Fitting the bike to the stand requires adjusting the jaws to the required tension before flipping a lever to snap them closed, and the broad span of the jaw means it's possible to eject and refit the same bike without readjusting the tension each time. Although it looks chunky, the clamp unit displayed a worrying degree of flex, which made exerting any serious amount of force on the bicycle difficult. Popping the head apart, the reason for this became apparent: the unit is made of reinforced plastic rather than cast or pressed metal. wiggles.co.uk

Rating

STABILITY
CONSTRUCTION
CLAMP DESIGN

OVERALL
5
10

Tacx Spider Team T3350

£180

A style of workstand popular with pro tour mechanics, the Spider Team supports the frame's bottom bracket while the fork dropouts are secured with a choice of interchangeable adaptors (compatible with all existing standards). Ideal for bikes with unusual shapes, its design negates the need to find a place on the frame or seatpost to clamp the bike, while also eliminating the possibility of damaging carbon-fibre tubing. It's extremely adjustable too, so finding a comfortable angle to work on the bike is easy. The direct interface between the lowest part of the frame and the stand also makes jobs like removing stuck bottom bracket cups easier, and a removable tray keeps your tools close at hand. The tripod base is stable even on bumpy surfaces, while keeping the bike's weight central further aids stability. Unfortunately, the connection between the base and the top part of the stand has a noticeable amount of play, which slightly undermines its otherwise solid construction. tacx.com

Rating

STABILITY
CONSTRUCTION
CLAMP DESIGN

OVERALL
7
10





The Winning Formula

OF STAGE 6, 2015 CRITÉRIUM DU DAUPHINÉ



© tdwreport.com

Q-RINGS

GO FARTHER AND FASTER WITH Q-RINGS

INPOWER

WHAT MATTERS IS INSIDE



RUI COSTA ORIENTS HIS PERFORMANCE AROUND WINNING... LITERALLY.

Earlier this season Rui tested his distinct pedaling style with the new **INpower** power meter to determine where he was applying the most force in his pedal stroke. After years of riding with **Q-Rings**, he found that he pushes hardest at **91.4°** – his **Optimum Chainring Angle**, which gave him an **Optimum Chainring Position** of 3.



X-Tools Home Mechanic Prep Stand £80

We were instantly impressed by how smoothly the twin legs and telescoping neck deployed. Clunking reassuringly into place, the whole package feels solid. A keyed design means there's no chance of the upper part of the stand twisting, while the head clamp rotates on two pairs of ratchet-like teeth, ensuring it also remains in place. Replacement head units on some of the pricier models on test cost more than this complete stand, but for the money, this is a great buy. Flex is minimal and swinging the bike around is easy. Once folded, the head unit tucks in flush against the body, so the whole package takes up a minimum of storage space, while its low weight makes it easy to get around. Extremely capable, you'd have to be planning to use your stand very frequently to justify spending more.

hotlines-uk.com

Rating

STABILITY	██████████	██████████	██████████	██████████	██████████	██████████	██████████	██████████	██████████
CONSTRUCTION	██████████	██████████	██████████	██████████	██████████	██████████	██████████	██████████	██████████
CLAMP DESIGN	██████████	██████████	██████████	██████████	██████████	██████████	██████████	██████████	██████████

OVERALL
8/10



Topeak Prepstand Max £100

The smallest on test, clocking in at a scant 2.5kg, this crafty stand's performance proved to be anything but lightweight. Quick to erect and compact enough to carry in its own shoulder bag, it's perfect for taking on a cycling holiday or to sportives. The centre of the stand cradles the bike's bottom bracket, while the down tube is held in position by an adjustable clamp. With the bike's centre of gravity located directly over the stand, stability is terrific and although the clamp doesn't pin the bike quite as rigidly as some others,

the overall lack of flex means unwanted movement is kept to a minimum. The unique design also allows both wheels to spin, making it easy to work on both ends of the bike simultaneously. Unfortunately, getting the best performance out of this stand is dependent on having the right bike. While it deals well with traditional tube and bottom bracket profiles, bikes with odd tube shapes may not fit as securely, and clamping oddly shaped carbon tubes is not a prospect we relish.

extrauk.co.uk



Rating

STABILITY	██████████	██████████	██████████	██████████	██████████	██████████	██████████	██████████	██████████
CONSTRUCTION	██████████	██████████	██████████	██████████	██████████	██████████	██████████	██████████	██████████
CLAMP DESIGN	██████████	██████████	██████████	██████████	██████████	██████████	██████████	██████████	██████████

OVERALL
8/10



Feedback Sports Pro Elite Repair Stand

£250

This stand has been a stalwart of the *BikesEtc* workshop since issue one. The head clamp is genius – almost as good as sprouting a third arm. When fitting the bike, it can simply be pressed shut, its ratcheting mechanism grabbing the inserted bike firmly. Feedback calls this 'secure-lock' and it's far easier than fiddling around with knobs while supporting the bike with the other hand. Once in place, the head can be pivoted to achieve a comfortable working angle. Its tripod design is more stable than the equivalent twin-leg designs, particularly on uneven ground, although the aluminium frame does flex more than some others. Once you've finished working, you can eject it at the push of a button. The cast steel head is not only incredibly robust but near infinitely serviceable. It will survive years of heavy use, and can be repaired once it finally wears out as Feedback provides a range of spares. 2pure.co.uk

Rating

STABILITY	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>
CONSTRUCTION	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>
CLAMP DESIGN	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>

OVERALL
8/10

Cyclo Modular Work Station

£180

Cyclo's workstand comes as a modular system based around a universal head unit that can be coupled to a variety of different mounts. We tested the Portable Bike Stand, comprising a collapsible twin-leg stand paired with the universal clamp, which provides plenty of stability. Depositing the bike into the stand and moderating the clamping force is easy, and a lever on the reverse allows you to swing the bike around to reach tricky spots. The optional wall mount (£25) is worthwhile, allowing you to solidly anchor the bike for tricky jobs such as shifting stuck parts. weldtite.co.uk

Rating

STABILITY	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>
CONSTRUCTION	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>
CLAMP DESIGN	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>

OVERALL
8/10



THREE OF THE BEST WORKSHOP BIBLES

PARK TOOL BIG BLUE BOOK OF BICYCLE REPAIR by C. Calvin Jones



£25, madison.co.uk

Bang up-to-date and easy-to-follow photographic guides to anything you could want to do to a bike. Roadies may want to pass on MTB-specific chapters.

ZINN & THE ART OF ROAD BIKE MAINTENANCE by Lennard Zinn



£18, velopress.com

Sage mechanical advice from cycling guru Zinn. This road-specific reference guide is illustrated with simple line drawings.

BIKE MECHANIC by Guy Andrews and Rohan Dubash



£30, bloomsbury.com

At home on a workbench or a coffee table, this book is part manual, part homage to the mechanics who keep the circus that is pro cycling rolling.



When it comes to road helmets, I accept no compromises. The constant urge for aerodynamic helmets makes riders forget they need ventilation for optimum performance. This is where the Icarus comes in; compact enough to be aero and an open design for perfect ventilation. And on top of that? It looks great!

FOR THE FULL STORY, CHECK:
BBBCYCLING.COM/BIKE-WEAR/HELMETS/BHE-05

WHERE AERODYNAMICS AND THERMODYNAMICS COME TOGETHER.

Thibaut Pinot
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HELMETS
ICARUS / BHE-05





PICK AND MIX

Independent bike shop, megastore or internet giant? Sportive or race bike? We've rounded up a mixed bag this month. All come in under £2,000 and all have much to recommend them, but which one is right for you?

WORDS ANDY WATERMAN

This issue, we've tested four bikes that, while similarly priced, are quite different to each other. The cheapest is the Fuji Transonic 2.5, a £1,600 aero road bike with Shimano Ultegra and neat modern components. We'd hoped to review the more expensive 2.3 model (£1,850) but were glad to get the 2.5 instead because it looks like a stunning example of a wallet-friendly amateur race bike.

The Cinelli Saetta Radical Plus is well-equipped for such a boutique bike, and its classic Italian geometry should make it a good all-rounder, for sportives, weekend club rides or trips to more mountainous terrain. And a strong dealer network makes it easy to get the bike set up according to your needs – another bonus in our eyes.

The Canyon Ultimate CF should offer a similar ride feel to the Cinelli, but with the added value that

comes with being an internet-only brand. But will it fit? We've had sizing issues with Canyons in the past.

Cervélo, another boutique brand, is now offering its R2 model at under £2,000. This is based on the bike the Garmin Sharp team was racing in Grand Tours for the last few years, so we had high hopes for it, but will the compromises involved with hitting a price point detract from such a great frame? There's only one way to find out...

BIKES ON TEST



CERVELO R2105
£1,999



CINELLI SAETTA
RADICAL PLUS ATHENA £2,000



FUJI TRANSONIC 2.5
£1,600



CANYON ULTIMATE CF SL 9.0
£1,999



HOW WE TEST

When it comes to testing bikes, we don't take anything the manufacturers tell us as gospel: the first thing we do when a new bike arrives is to take its measurements and compare our findings with the geometry stated. We also compare the spec with what is advertised – has anything changed?

With the seat and bars moved into roughly the correct positions, we head out to ride a few laps of our local park loop to fine-tune the set-up before the first big test ride. Bigger rides consist of short, sharp climbs, longer seated efforts, descents and a variety of road surfaces.

Every aspect of the bikes' handling and performance is assessed and scored according to our detailed criteria, and then the bikes are passed around the team for an all-important second opinion. Finally those opinions, scores and measurements are collated into the comprehensive reviews you're about to read.

THE OVERALL RATING FOR EACH BIKE IS BASED ON THESE ELEMENTS...

FRAME

Our in-house testing questionnaire rates frames out of 30, based on geometry, on-road feel, stiffness, compliance, finish and intended use.

COMPONENTS

We rate components out of 20, based on groupset and finishing kit – great bars and stems will be marked down if they're the wrong size for the frame.

WHEELS

We rate the wheel and tyres package out of 20, weighting it towards the wheels: tyres come and go but wheels are a more expensive element to replace.

THE RIDE

Rated out of 30, we take into account ride quality and also value – does the bike do what we expect of a bike at this price? The best exceed expectations.



Cervélo R2 105 £1,999

Lightweight and low-profile, there's racing in its blood



About the bike

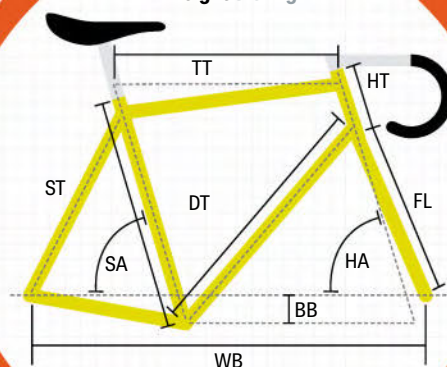
Cervélo has two ranges of road bikes, the R Series and the S Series. The S Series is the aero offering, while the R Series consists of more classic road racing bikes. The R2 tested here is the latest generation of the bike that Stuart O'Grady rode to success in Paris-Roubaix back in 2007, and brings this lightweight platform to a previously unseen price point, below £2k. The heart of this bike is the lightweight frame but with Shimano's excellent and affordable 105 groupset, it should be able to shine.

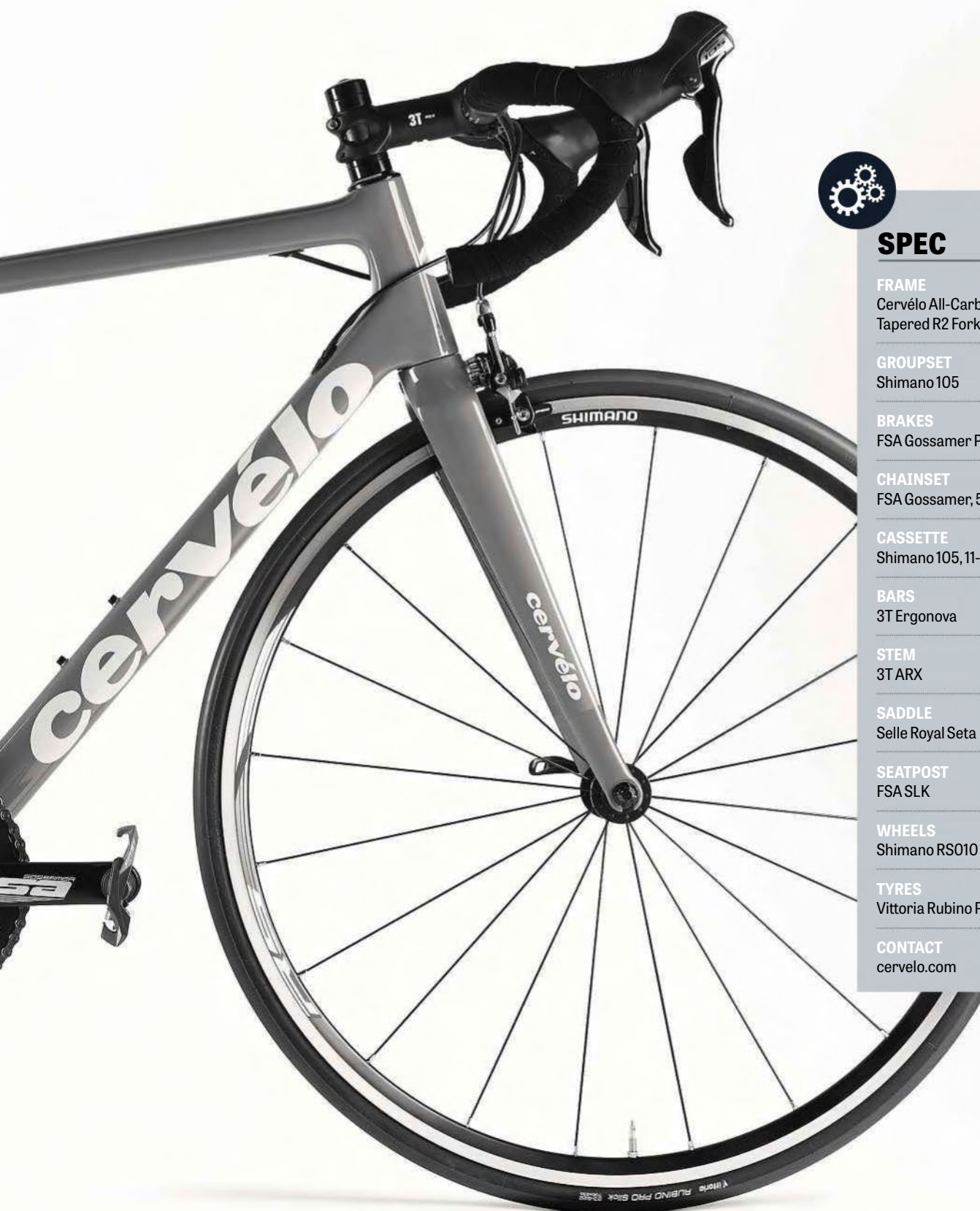


GEOMETRY

	Claimed	Measured			
Top tube (TT)	548mm	546mm	Head tube (HT)	148mm	146mm
Seat tube (ST)		518mm	Head angle (HA)	73.1°	73.2°
Down tube (DT)		591mm	Seat angle (SA)	73°	73.1°
Fork length (FL)		373mm	Wheelbase (WB)		967mm
			BB drop (BB)	68mm	73mm

Size tested 54
Weight 8.04kg





SPEC

FRAME
Cervélo All-Carbon,
Tapered R2 Fork

GROUPSET
Shimano 105

BRAKES
FSA Gossamer Pro

CHAINSET
FSA Gossamer, 50/34

CASSETTE
Shimano 105, 11-28

BARS
3T Ergonova

STEM
3T ARX

SADDLE
Selle Royal Seta

SEATPOST
FSA SLK

WHEELS
Shimano RS010

TYRES
Vittoria Rubino Pro, 23c

CONTACT
cervelo.com

The frame

R Series frames are built to be light, and Cervélo claims that the 56cm R2 frame weighs less than 1kg. Impressive stuff, but then so is some of the other technology Cervélo has thrown at this bike. It actually uses the same frame as the more expensive R3, which itself is 24% stiffer at the head tube than the previous generation R3 (it now has a tapered 1.375 to 1.125in steerer) – it uses squared-

off oval tubes (Cervélo calls them 'Squoval') to achieve a level of aerodynamics unheard of among most lightweight bikes. Cervélo reckons these tubes save 7w compared to the previous R3, even more against other bikes. It's clear on first inspection just how much thought has gone into the frame, like the squared-off seat tube, ultra-thin seat stays or asymmetric BBright bottom bracket, which allows the left-hand chainstay to be built up

for added stiffness. The geometry chart tells you a lot about Cervélo's racing pedigree – with a super-steep 73.2 degree head angle, the shortest wheelbase of any 54cm bike we've tested at 967mm and a short 146mm head tube – it's all about 'fast' handling and riding in a low, aggressive position. Cervélo talks a lot about stack and reach measurements in its literature, which means the bikes grow longer and taller with each size jump ➔

The asymmetric BBright bottom bracket allows the left-hand chainstay to be built up for added stiffness

– something that isn't always the case with other brands. That's good, especially for smaller riders, but it does create some oddities – for example, our 54cm tester actually has a shorter front-centre (measured from BB to centre of front hub) than the 51cm bike, thanks to a steeper head angle and a fork with 10mm less offset. That keeps the wheelbase tight but meant we suffered toe overlap, which was an issue for us at low speeds and traffic lights (not what this bike is designed for, but where many of us spend a lot of our time).

Components

Cervélo specs a wide mix of components on the R2, but the backbone is Shimano 105. Elsewhere, FSA provides a BBright specific chainset with 50/34 rings as well as FSA Gossamer brakes, which perform adequately, especially after a bedding-in period. The bars and stem come from 3T, the stem being 100mm long and the bars 42cm wide. The seatpost is the carbon SLK model from FSA. Its 27.2mm diameter helps with additional compliance.


Wheels

Shimano RS010 wheels are cheap, but none the worse for it. The freehub engages confidently every time you power away from the lights, they're stiff and the braking surface is machined for reassuringly powerful slowing down. What they're not, though, is light, so they're likely to be the first part of this bike you'll want to upgrade for race days. The Rubino Pros performed well, gripping confidently on dry descents and not flattening when we hit rough and gravelly tarmac. The 23mm tyres mean the R2 isn't the most comfortable bike we've ridden.

The ride

The geometry of the R2 had us scratching our heads. We'd always thought of it as Cervélo's sportive-style bike, lightweight, stable and comfortable. But with its short wheelbase, steep head angle and tight back end, everything about it screams 'race bike'. Our first outing on the R2 was a hilly solo ride into Essex. It rode well uphill, both in and out of the saddle, and was quickly up to speed as soon as the road flattened out. It wasn't as comfortable as expected though, and the fork felt incredibly stiff in comparison to the



rear. Point the R2 downhill and that stiffness, plus the short, racy wheelbase, makes it feel twitchy. It was on the second ride that the R2 really began to make sense. We headed out with the local chaingang, and in a tightly formed paceline, charging through and off at 45kmh, the tight wheelbase and steep head angle have a purpose – they allow you to tuck in incredibly tightly behind the rider in front to maximise the effect of drafting. On that ride, we scored a handful of Strava PBs, proving that when you start chomping on the 3T handlebars in a tight racing-style bunch, the R2 is very, very fast. But that's our issue with the R2: it's a race bike, pure and simple. If you're a sportive rider who regularly pushes for miles, there are bikes out there with longer wheelbases that are less punishing of mistakes. If, however, your idea of fun is pinning a number on and racing at 40kmh for an hour at a time, the R2 is a steal. 

RATING

FRAME

Stiff and light with aero tubing and racy geometry

COMPONENTS

A mix of 105, good-value FSA and 3T finishing kit

WHEELS

Cheap, stiff and reliable wheels, decent tyres

THE RIDE

Not as comfy as expected but great in a chaingang

OVERALL

7.8
10



Components are a mix of Shimano 105 and FSA (above); the 'Squoval' tubes (right) achieve aerodynamic levels unheard of among most lightweight bikes



With its steep head angle, tight back end and short wheelbase, this ride screams 'race bike'

THE CHASE IS ON.

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Cinelli Saetta Radical Plus Athena £2,000

Italian Stallion? Black Beauty? Or just plain radical?



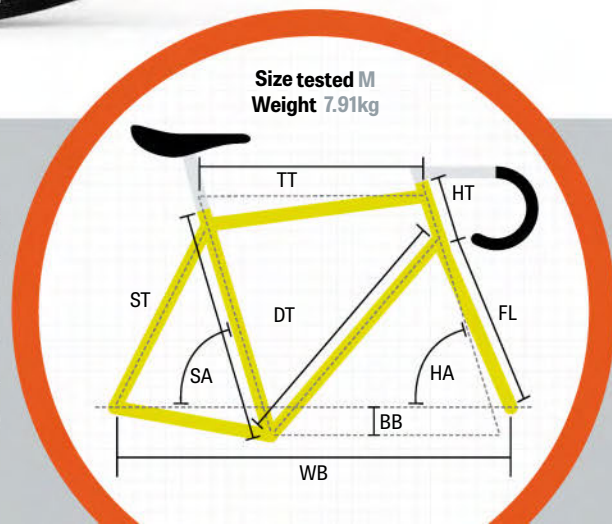
About the bike

Italy, 1947. The war's over and so is Cino Cinelli's career as a professional cyclist. What to do next? With a taste for engineering, he starts Cinelli bikes, and over the coming years comes up with numerous innovations, including the first aluminium handlebars and the first saddle with a plastic base. Nearly 70 years later, Cinelli is still a big name in the world of finishing kit, but what about bikes? The Radical Plus is the company's bike for the advanced amateur – we duly employed our own advanced amateurishness to put it to the test...



GEOMETRY

	Claimed	Measured			
Top tube (TT)	545mm	546mm	Head tube (HT)	145mm	145mm
Seat tube (ST)	480mm	485mm	Head angle (HA)	72.5°	72.7°
Down tube (DT)		588mm	Seat angle (SA)	73.5°	73.4°
Fork length (FL)	368mm	370mm	Wheelbase (WB)	981mm	985mm
			BB drop (BB)	68mm	71mm





SPEC

FRAME

Cinelli monocoque, 1.125 to 1.25in tapered carbon fork

GROUPSET

Campagnolo Athena 11

BRAKES

Campagnolo Dual Pivot

CHAINSET

Campagnolo Athena, 50/34

CASSETTE

Campagnolo, 12-27

BARS

Cinelli DNA

STEM

Cinelli DNA

SADDLE

Selle Italia X1

SEATPOST

Cinelli DNA, 27.2mm (with shim)

WHEELS

Campagnolo Scirocco

TYRES

Vittoria Rubino Pro, 25c

CONTACT

chickencycles.co.uk

Frame

In the Saetta Radical, Cinelli employs a carbon monocoque construction to produce a lightweight, stiff, yet compliant frame that is compatible with electronic and mechanical gear shifting. With our bike using a mechanical groupset, we had external gear cables running on the underside of the down tube and an internally routed rear brake cable. Most of the stiffness necessary in a bike comes

from the head tube, down tube, bottom bracket shell, seat tube and chainstays, and these elements are notably oversized in comparison to the incredibly slender top tube and seatstays. These are shaped so as to allow for some comfort, and the Saetta Radical Plus does a genuinely good job of dissipating road buzz. In terms of geometry, Cinelli has chosen an approach that is far from radical. The 71mm BB drop, 985mm wheelbase

and head and seat tube angles of 72.7 and 73.4 degrees are all totally normal and will feel familiar to anyone who's ridden a road bike before. Cinelli claims the frame alone weighs 1,050g, with the fork adding just 380g. The fork is interesting in that it uses the 1.25 to 1.125in taper instead of the more common, stiffer 1.5in taper. The reality is you'd have to be supremely finely tuned to notice much difference in reduced stiffness. ➔

We don't see many bikes with Campagnolo, but Athena shifters are a joy to use

Components


Campagnolo Athena 11-speed is a joy to use, but it does require an expert touch – a quarter turn of the cable tension adjuster of the rear mech makes a big difference to how quietly and crisply the gears change. The basic version of the groupset is employed here, with alloy cranks and alloy brake levers, rather than the more expensive carbon versions. A 50/34 compact chainset and 12-27 cassette provides a wide spread of gears, although some will think (mistakenly, in our opinion) that the lack of an 11-tooth cog at the back will limit top speed. The last point on the group: the brakes are fantastic. Cinelli bars, stem and seatpin complete the package. The bars are an interesting proposition thanks to their very shallow drop; you barely notice the change in position moving from hoods to drop, posing the question, what's the point?

Wheels

Campagnolo doesn't just supply the groupset, it provides the wheels too, in the form of the 35mm-deep Sciroccos. They're a decent pair of hoops, with 16 aero spokes in the front wheel and 21 in the back being enough, thanks to the strong, deep-section rim. At 1,725g (claimed) per pair, they're not especially heavy and the rim, while providing some aerodynamic advantage, isn't so deep as to make riding in crosswinds a handful. The Italian theme continues to the tyres, which are supplied by Vittoria, based near Bergamo (home of the season-closing Classic, the Tour of Lombardy). Our bike came with the Rubino Pro model in the 25mm wide guise. They're nice tyres and ones we've used a great deal in the past with no problems, wet or dry.

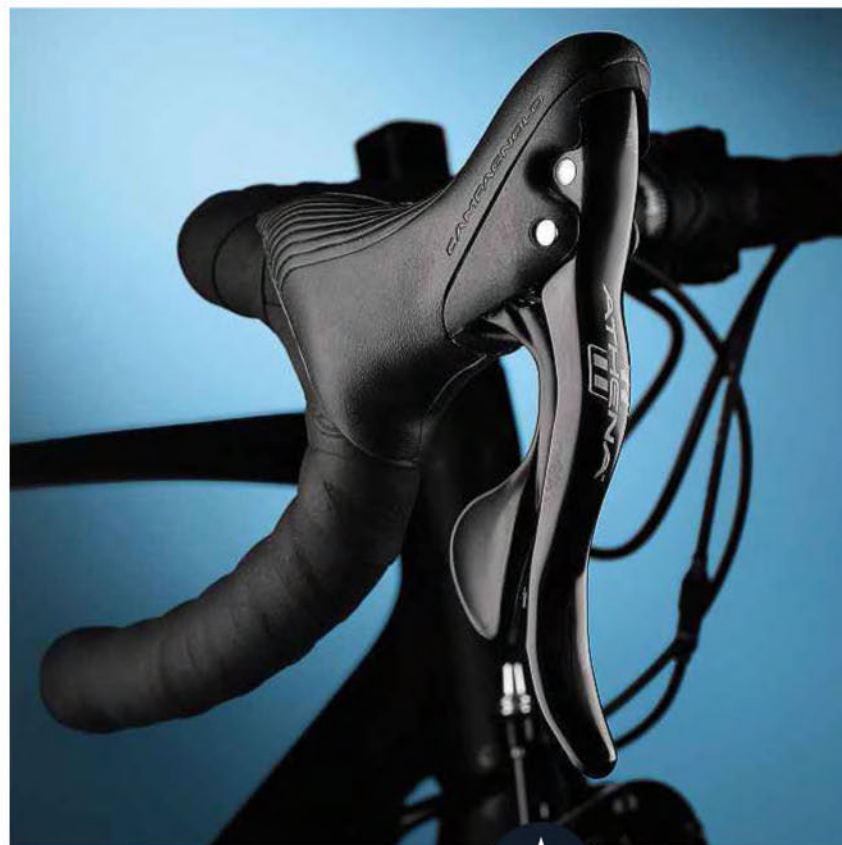
The ride

It's a long time since we rode a bike with a 120mm stem. Pro bikes have ridiculously long stems but for most of us, 90-110mm is a more sensible choice. What we're coming round to saying is that the Radical Plus felt very long. It brought home that the sizing of a bike's components generally has a far larger effect on how a bike feels than the components themselves. Add 25g to a stem and you won't notice the weight, but add 2cm to its length and it will completely change the way the bike rides. We felt much

more comfortable after a swap to a 110mm stem, which opened up the hip angle enough to be able to push hard on the pedals without feeling we were overreaching. The Campag groupset works very well, although the gears seem to have a narrower window of perfect adjustment than the competitors. An ill-placed quarter turn on the cable adjuster at the back is enough to cause unpleasant noises to emanate from the cassette. The brakes, however, are brilliant, and a serious rival to Shimano's crown. Campagnolo also supplied the wheels and they're really good too – not too heavy but with some aero advantage, but none of the disadvantages like carbon braking surfaces or susceptibility to cross winds. We enjoyed our time on them as we did on the Radical Plus as a whole – it's not quite as radical as the name suggests, but it's a great ride nonetheless. 



While designed with a 31.6mm seat tube, the Radical Plus comes with a reducer shim and a 27.2mm post (above); external gear cables (right) run under the down tube



RATING

FRAME

Well-balanced, familiar road bike geometry

COMPONENTS

Campagnolo gearing and Cinelli finishing kit

WHEELS

Decent semi-aero wheels shod in great tyres

THE RIDE

Not as radical as the name suggests but a good ride

OVERALL

8.0
10

The Sciroccos are a decent pair of hoops, with minimal spokes and a strong rim



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Fuji Transonic

2.5 £1,600

Aero, Ultegra and good looks for £1,600? Konnichiwa!



About the bike

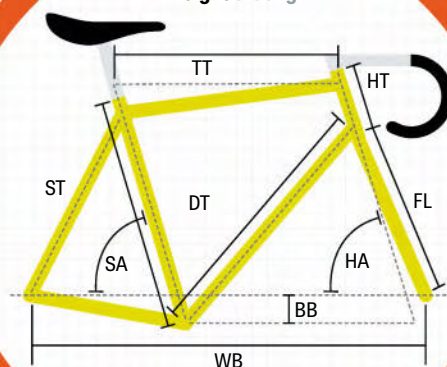
Fuji bikes started business in 1899, albeit under different ownership to today. The company is named and after Japan's Mount Fuji, which also appears in the logo. It's a traditional symbol of strength and endurance – two characteristics we hoped to find in the aerodynamic Transonic 2.5. It's rumoured to be at the racy end of the spectrum, but with a competitive price, Shimano Ultegra components and all-round minimal fuss (its cable routing is among the neatest we've ever seen), we reckon we're in for a smooth ride...



GEOMETRY

	Claimed	Measured			
Top tube (TT)	545mm	545mm	Head tube (HT)	135mm	135mm
Seat tube (ST)	520mm	520mm	Head angle (HA)	73°	72.5°
Down tube (DT)		592mm	Seat angle (SA)	73.5°	72.6°
Fork length (FL)		375mm	Wheelbase (WB)	974mm	978mm
			BB drop (BB)	68mm	73mm

Size tested M
Weight 8.05kg





SPEC

FRAME

C5 high-modulus carbon, PF BB30, 1.5in tapered carbon fork

GROUPSET

Shimano Ultegra

BRAKES

Shimano 105 direct mount

CHAINSET

Oval Concepts 520, 52/36

CASSETTE

Shimano 105, 11-28

BARS

Oval Concepts 310

STEM

Oval Concepts 313

SADDLE

Oval Concepts R500

SEATPOST

Fuji

WHEELS

Oval 327 aero alloy clincher, 20/24h

TYRES

Vittoria Zaffiro Pro Slick, 23c

CONTACT

evanscycles.com

The frame

Last year, Fuji sponsored the Tour de France team NetApp-Endura, and it was under that team that the new-shape Transonic was released. It uses a multitude of deep and slippery shapes to cut through the air efficiently, maximising speed for minimum effort. Consequently the fork is deep and includes a fairing at the top, the down tube uses a truncated aerofoil design (to fit in with UCI

rules) and the seat tube curves around the wheel to smooth airflow. That curve is likely the reason our measured seat tube angle doesn't correspond too closely with the claimed angle – we measure the angle at the seatpost, but Fuji will measure an imaginary angle from the bottom bracket to the saddle. The head tube tapers from 1.5in to 1.125in at the top, and both front and rear the brakes are Shimano's new direct mount, using two bolts. We

chose a size 54 (medium) bike, which has a short 135mm head tube – it's an obvious declaration of the bike's racing pedigree, as is the shortish wheelbase. With the pressfit BB30 bottom bracket shell creating a large area of carbon around the bottom of the bike, the Transonic feels stiff, but it's quite comfy too, and given the deep section aero tube shapes, it's surprisingly good at dampening vibrations out on the road. ➔

The 52/36 chainset and 11-28 cassette is wider than a normal road racing cassette, but proved an excellent choice when we took it racing

Components

It's a rare treat for us to get an upgrade to Shimano's Ultegra but it's a nice touch here – so good is 105, most brands seem to spec it a long way up their ranges. The direct mount brakes are actually 105, and a positive consequence of their use is that you can squeeze most 28mm tyres in – we tried some fat 28mm Schwalbe Ones with no problem. Despite the name, Oval provides a distinctly round chainset, as well as bars, stem and saddle – which is unusually padded for such a purposeful bike. It's all good gear and, given our 54cm tester was specced with a 100mm stem and 42cm bars, well proportioned to the bike.


Wheels

Having provided so much of the finishing kit, it's no surprise that the wheels are from Oval too. A fashionably wide and ostensibly aerodynamic U-shaped rim is mated to neat-looking Oval hubs, via 20 spokes at the front and 24 in the rear. During our test period, the hubs didn't skip a beat and thanks to the wide rim, the 23mm Vittoria Zaffiro Pro Slick tyres measured up a whopping 24.5mm using a vernier calliper. We've had a good experience with Vittoria tyres recently and the Zaffiro Pros proved more than adequate, especially given the Transonic 2.5 is the cheapest bike here.

The ride

We originally intended to test the £1,850 Transonic 2.3 but it proved unavailable, so we got the 2.5 instead. Despite being cheaper, it's largely the same bike – less hollow forged cranks (which would be lighter and a little stiffer) and more expensive wheels. So we weren't too disappointed when we got the 2.5, and when we tried it for size, we were genuinely excited – it felt immediately familiar and fit perfectly. It was such a good start, we decided to forego the usual first ride fettle and went straight to London's Redbridge Cycle Circuit for the Thursday evening circuit race. The ride out proved the bike to be fast in a straight line, picking up speed quickly when the traffic eased. With race numbers pinned on, we took the Transonic into its natural environment – the race circuit. The 52/36 chainset and 11-28 cassette is wider than a normal road racing cassette, but on this circuit proved an excellent choice, allowing us to use the big ring at all times,



despite the elevation gain – 425m in 40km. On the descents, the only negative was that we felt we'd prefer some more room to manoeuvre – an extra centimetre on the stem, perhaps. The direct-mount 105 brakes were brilliant, the tyres gripped well – even cornering at 55kmh – and on the rare occasions we saw the front of the bunch, the aero advantages of the frame were welcome. Sprinting out of the saddle, the bike felt perfectly composed and efficient. The following day, we took the Transonic for an easy leg stretcher. It was interesting to find it impress even at lower speeds, doing a good job of dampening vibrations over rough surfaces, and still putting the rider in a comfortable position even when pain and suffering are off the menu. We were impressed by the Transonic, and given its competitive price, wouldn't hesitate to recommend it. If speed's your thing, this bike is a great-value choice. 




RATING


FRAME

 Aero tube shapes and racy geometry, comfortable


COMPONENTS

 The Ultegra gearing is a nice touch at this price

WHEELS

 Wide, aero rims bump up the size of even skinny tyres

THE RIDE

 Feels at home in a racing environment

OVERALL

8.4
10



Direct-mount brakes (above) are great and allow tyres up to 28mm; although not a pro-level bike, the Transonic is UCI approved (right)



Aero U-shaped wheel rims are mated to neat Oval hubs which didn't skip a beat on test

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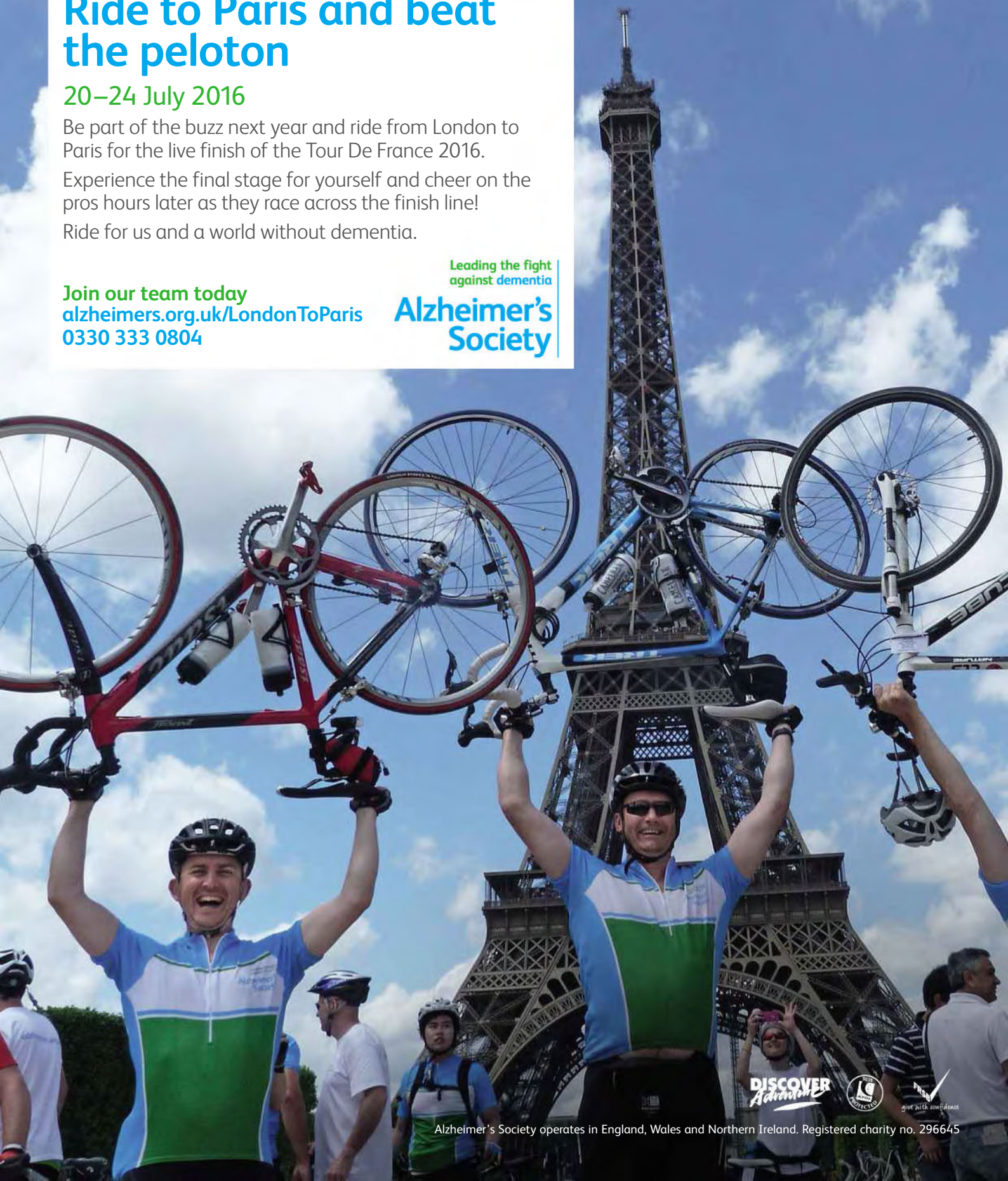
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£1,999 (+£46.99 delivery)

We find comfort and speed on this two grand Canyon



About the bike

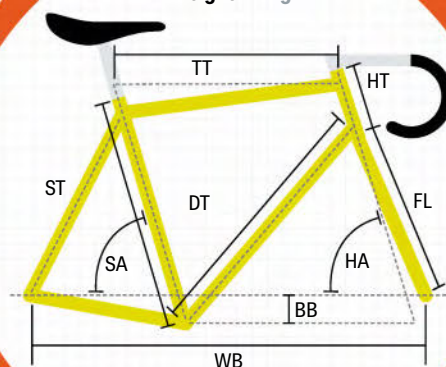
Canyon's direct sales model has proved a hit in the UK and among the first bikes to capture the British public's imagination was the Ultimate CF. Seen here is the SL model, which sits just below the top of the range SLX ridden by 2014 Giro d'Italia winner Niro Quintana. At the time of writing, the SLX is about to be replaced with a new model – does that mean the Ultimate CF will also get a makeover? We'll have to wait and see, but for now, here's the current Ultimate CF, which is intended as a lightweight workhorse of a bike.

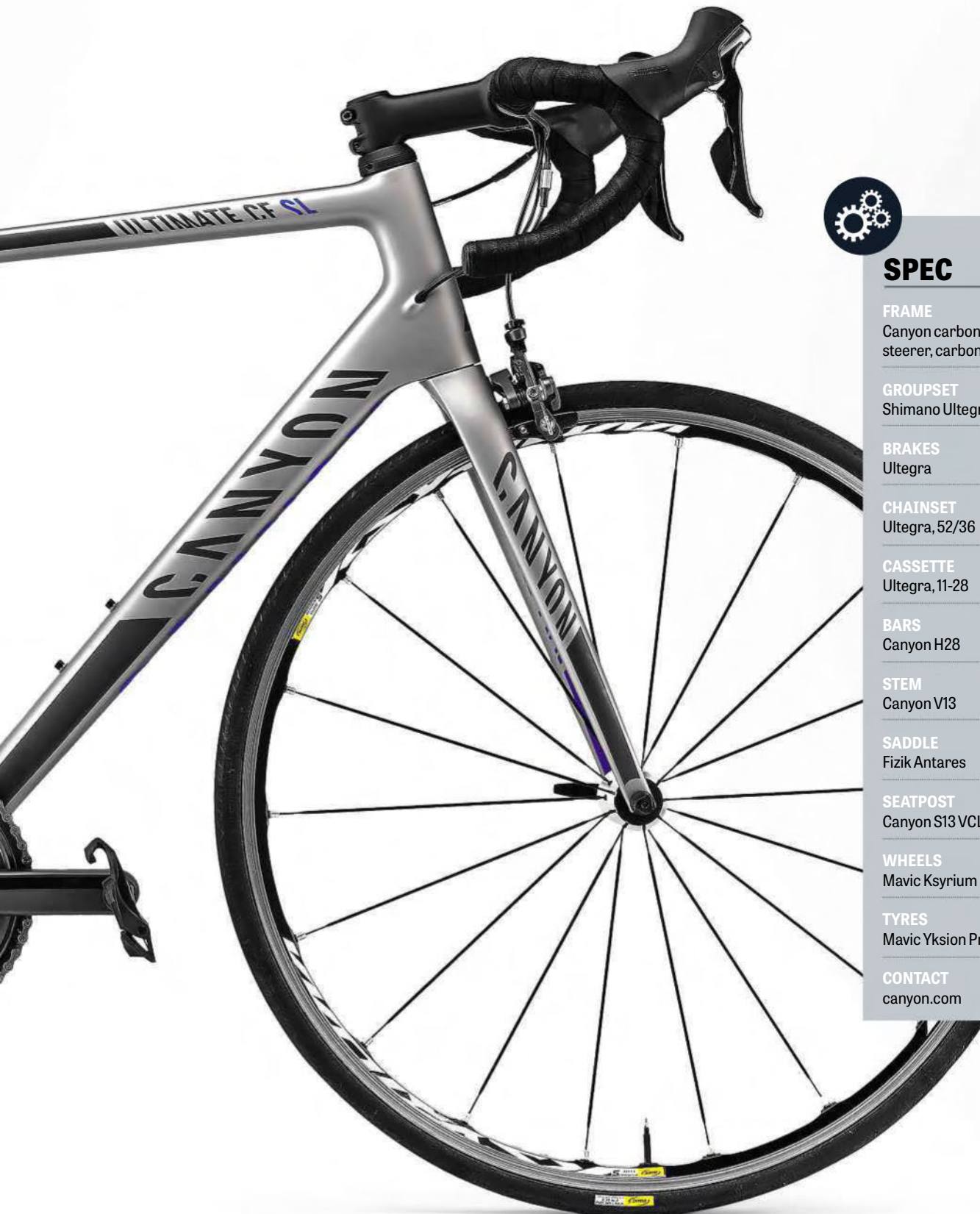


GEOMETRY

	Claimed	Measured			
Top tube (TT)	566mm	567mm	Head tube (HT)	170mm	170mm
Seat tube (ST)	563mm	565mm	Head angle (HA)	73.3°	73°
Down tube (DT)		609mm	Seat angle (SA)	73.5°	73°
Fork length (FL)		379mm	Wheelbase (WB)	995mm	1003mm
			BB drop (BB)		72mm

Size tested 56/L
Weight 7.14kg





SPEC

FRAME

Canyon carbon, 1.25in steerer, carbon fork

GROUPSET

Shimano Ultegra

BRAKES

Ultegra

CHAINSET

Ultegra, 52/36

CASSETTE

Ultegra, 11-28

BARS

Canyon H28

STEM

Canyon V13

SADDLE

Fizik Antares

SEATPOST

Canyon S13 VCLS

WHEELS

Mavic Ksyrium Elite S WTS

TYRES

Mavic Yksion Pro, 25c

CONTACT

canyon.com

Frame

A frame weight of 940g is light in anyone's book, but it warrants only second place in Canyon's line-up behind the feathery CF SLX, which is a claimed 790g. The Ultimate CF SL is a great frame, though, with Canyon's VCLS (Vertical Compliance, Lateral Stiffness) approach followed throughout, so you get skinny seatstays for comfort but beefy chainstays to maintain stiffness. Likewise the fork,

which uses a straight 1.25in steerer rather than a tapered and oversized unit, which often adds more stiffness than we think is really necessary and just contributes to front end discomfort. The bottom bracket is pressfit and the seat tube is the slender 27.2mm standard – perfect for building additional compliance into the seatpost as Canyon has done. The seat tube itself is an interesting shape, almost crimped halfway down to allow some flex, then

spreading out to a squared base. This creates a solid foundation to anchor the down tube, which is also vaguely squared off, like a capital D. Canyon uses its Sport Pro geometry on the Ultimate CF, which means the riding position is a little more upright than any of the other bikes here – if you've had a bike fit, we strongly recommend using your own measurements when sizing up a Canyon, rather than Canyon's bike fit checker. ➔

Slender seatstays and a 27.2mm seatpost contribute to the Ultimate CF SL's compliant ride

Components

The big downside of using a 1.25in steerer is stem availability – chances are your local bike shop won't have anything compatible in stock if you want to try one with an extra 10mm. Canyon does sell stems online though and the UK service department is good. The 110mm stem supplied on our size L test bike is about right for someone around 180cm/5ft 11in, but taller or more flexible riders may prefer a longer reach. Canyon's own-brand parts are really good, including the VCLS seatpost. The one used here is a more traditional looking design than the split version we tested in our comfort seatposts test in issue nine. There's not a lot to be said about Shimano Ultegra – it's great, and presented here in its entirety. And the combination of 52/36 chainset and 11-28 cassette should ensure all bases are covered when it comes to gearing.


Wheels

Mavic has never been content to follow fashion but with the Ksyrium Elite S it does look a step or two adrift from the mainstream. While most brands are going wider with rims, Mavic has stayed narrow (although things are changing next year) and concentrated on developing its own tyres. The Ksyriums are no doubt light and stiff, and contribute well to the bike's overall responsiveness, but they're narrow, and looking down at the Yksion tyres, it's hard to believe they're 25mm. The 23mm tyres on the Fuji, for instance, feel wider thanks to the wider rim. The Yksion tyres aren't bad in the dry, but we didn't feel hugely inspired in the wet – we'd be unlikely to swap them like-for-like when these wear out, but they're fine for the time being.

The ride

We've ridden Canyon bikes in a range of sizes and our 180cm/5ft 11in tester would normally head for the medium. This time we plumped for a large and despite it being a bit tall at the front, the reach felt much better. Canyon tends to be conservative with its stem lengths, so we would recommend trying before you buy – Canyon is increasing its UK demo days so keep an eye on its Facebook page to find your nearest. The front end of the Ultimate CF is the most comfortable here, and we suspect that's because of the



non-tapered steerer tube. The rear end is comfortable too, and once you get up to speed, you really get the feeling of gliding over the tarmac. It gets up to speed pretty easily too, while the stiffness around the bottom bracket encourages you to stay in a big gear and stomp up short climbs out of the saddle. As an internet retailer, Canyon has a reputation for producing great value bikes, and the Ultimate CF SL 9.0 is no exception. While the Ultegra groupset is a boon, it's the Mavic Ksyrium wheels that are the biggest selling point – worth over £500 on their own. These are proper race day wheels that won't leave you at any disadvantage in even the biggest, most gruelling sportives. We just wish the rims were a little wider. The Ultimate CF is a great bike and a worthy joint winner of this test. It doesn't excite in any one area but performs well everywhere, all the time, whatever the conditions. 



Ultegra components (above) perform brilliantly; while the non-tapered head tube (right) enhances front end comfort



RATING

FRAME

Stiff yet comfortable, and impressively light

COMPONENTS

Superb Ultegra and great own-brand finishing kit

WHEELS

Race-ready Ksyrium Elites are a big selling point

THE RIDE

Fast and lively, it performs like a more expensive bike

OVERALL

8.4
10

Canyon has a reputation for great value bikes and the Ultimate CF is no exception



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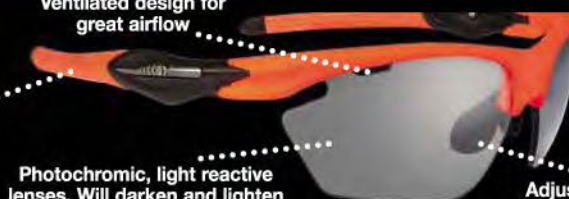


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Fuji Transonic 2.5

Canyon Ultimate CF SL 9.0



One fast and fantastic value, the other impressively light, we couldn't choose between these two great bikes


This test was intended to pit a group of bikes priced between £1,800 and £2,000 against each other. Being on the cusp of the 2016 model year, we weren't always able to get the exact models we wanted, so the price spread here is from £1,600 for the Fuji up to £2,045 for the Canyon. And funnily enough, those are the two bikes that impressed most.

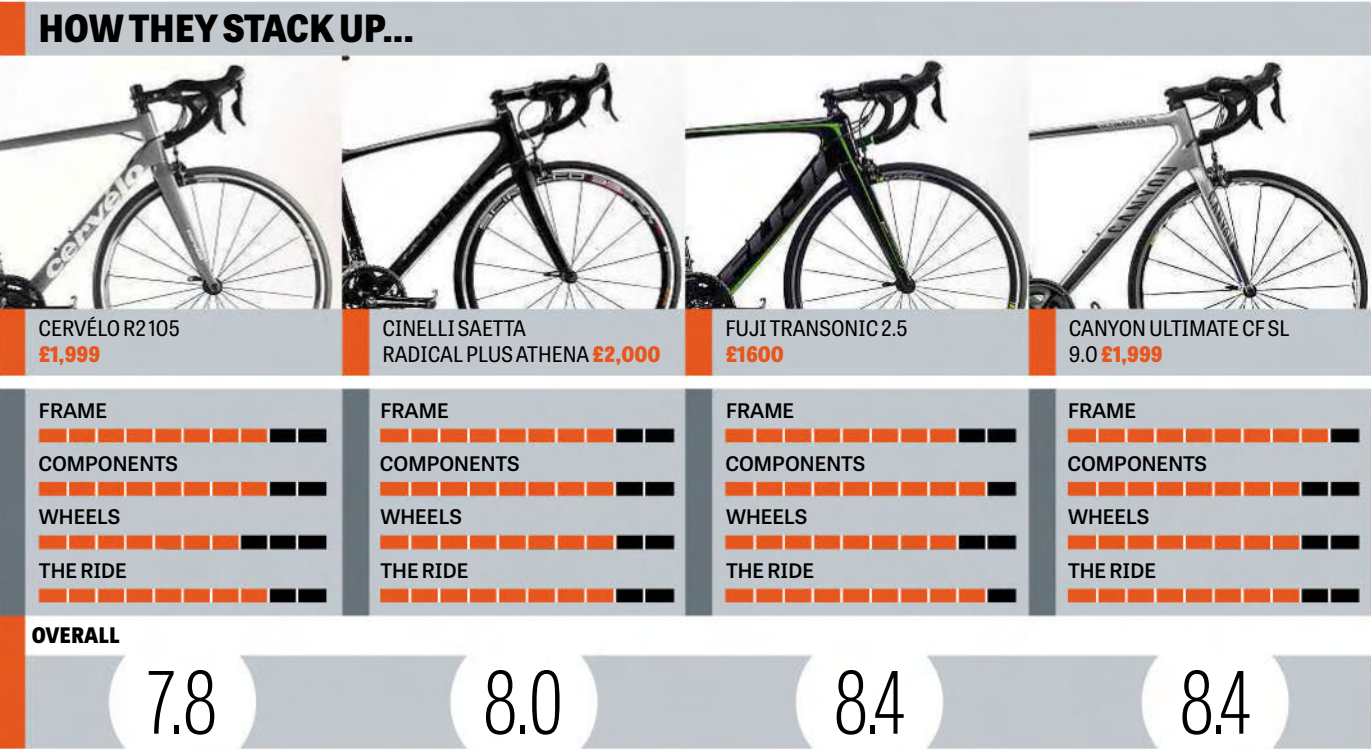
But first, Cervélo: we struggled to understand the geometry chart for the R2. Sure, the contact points grow outwards proportionally with each

size, but with a 54 having the same front-centre measurement as a 48, we think handling at speed is weighted towards experienced racers over short distances, rather than long-distance sportive riders.

Cinelli has produced a really nice bike in the Saetta Radical Plus. We enjoyed the Campag Athena groupset, the wheels are great and the finishing kit is all good stuff – the fact that you can spec and change the parts individually to suit your needs with your local bike shop is another bonus. This is boutique bike at a prêt-à-rouler price. Recommended.

The Fuji Transonic 2.5, though, is a brilliant bike. There aren't many bikes we hop on and feel immediately at home, but this was one – and it's fast, too. If you're in the market for a great value race bike, the Transonic would be an excellent choice.

Canyon always impresses in terms of value, but it's the comfort and low weight of the Ultimate CF that ultimately makes it desirable. They're nearly £500 apart in price, and they ride very differently, but both Fuji and Canyon have produced test-winning bikes in the Transonic and the Ultimate CF. 



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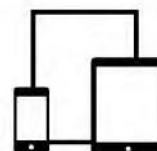
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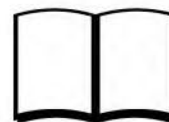


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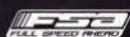
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RIDING

Finish strong

Go faster in the second half of a ride to achieve a negative split and you're more likely to blitz your PB. Does it work? Just ask Dowsett or Wiggins

1

PICK YOUR ALLIES CAREFULLY

Nerves and adrenaline make it hard to resist sprinting from the off, especially when you see riders going past. Sitting-in with a fast group might tow you along for a while but you'll suffer in the end. You'll feel better bridging over to quicker groups later, rather than getting blown out by a bunch that's too speedy.

2

GET COMFORTABLE WITH BEING SLOW

It's drilled into athletes to give it their all. Just don't give the lot in the first half of the ride. It can feel weird to be riding at below your maximum but holding something in reserve for later will make you faster over the whole distance. Try out your strategy on some practice rides to set your mind at rest.

3

HEART RATE

It's difficult to judge how hard you're working, so invest in a heart rate monitor for an objective measure. The maximum average heart rate sustainable over a steady but intensive hour-long effort is your functional threshold level (britishcycling.org.uk can help you determine yours). Try to stay at least 5% below this level until the last hour of the ride.

4

STICK TO THE PLAN

The time difference between the two halves of your ride should be small – around 1-2%. The aim is not to have an easy ride in the first half, just to avoid blowing up. A good strategy is to divide the course in four and work out where you want to be at each quarter. Throttle back if you get ahead. If you've got energy left in the final quarter, that's the time to cut loose.

5

DON'T LET HILLS TRIP YOU UP

It's easier to gauge your effort in a velodrome than out in the wild, where hills and headwinds can ruin the best-laid plans. On anything other than a flat course, speed and time are unreliable measures of effort. Using a power meter, if possible, can help you ride more consistently, regardless of gradient or wind conditions.

OUT OF
THE SADDLE
#4



Yoga

Step out of your cleats and into a handstand

➔ What all cyclists share – weekend club riders, Brompton commuters, BMX tricksters – is a basic repetitive movement: hip flexion. Repeatedly contracting hip flexors to lift a leg will make them strong but it will also make them short, a main cause of lower back pain.

Many cyclists blame a hunched riding position for their sore lower back, but an aerodynamic tuck actually creates a different set of issues – a weakened mid back and a closed-in chest area may contribute to shallow respiration.

Yoga sequences are a perfect complement to the biomechanics of cycling. They're often dynamic and heat generating, which helps prevent soft tissue injuries. The body is twisted and lifted across its full range of movement and weight-bearing poses train muscles to be strong and long. Many poses stretch the hip flexors while placing demands on the upper body: try warrior poses, back-bending shapes and even handstands.

Alexandra Cat owns three bikes, cycles daily and is a yoga teacher

Natural high

Manipulate testosterone levels for strength, stamina and brain function

When Lance Armstrong finally confessed to consuming the A-Z of his medical cabinet; high on the list was the hormone testosterone, a chemical messenger carried by the blood to organs and tissues in the body that can have many positive effects on cycling performance.

'Testosterone preserves and increases lean muscle mass and bone density; and can improve cognitive function, as well as your ability to recover from an extended bouts of exercise,' says Dr Will Mangar, head of blood-profiling outfit InDurance. 'Those are the well-known benefits, anyway. But testosterone is also responsible for driving the whole process of creating red blood cells, ideal in a sport where your muscles are continuously demanding oxygen.'

LIFT YOUR LEVELS

Studies have shown that as little as 90 minutes of sub-maximal exercise – anything that regularly takes you up to 85% of maximum heart rate – can result in a slight decrease in testosterone. If you ramp up the intensity, you can expect a significant decrease after a couple of hours. Happily, a bit of rest and recuperation usually brings levels back to normal but the day-in-day-out efforts of say, a Grand Tour, can leave riders wrestling with extreme fatigue, severe mood changes and decreased muscle mass.

'If we had an athlete with low testosterone levels, we'd tell them to take their foot off pedal a bit,'

'If you raise your testosterone level you can expect increases in power output, recovery and stamina'

explains Mangar, 'And we'd advise them to follow a strength-training plan, too. It's the opposite of endurance exercise as it raises rather than depletes testosterone. In men, the body's natural levels of testosterone decrease as they age so I'd recommend those over 35 split their week between 80% riding and 20% weight training.'

MAXIMUM GAINS

You don't necessarily need to train with weights, but employing the major muscle groups such as your quads and glutes is key. 'Make sure you train these muscles to exhaustion,' says Mangar. 'You can expect increases in power output, recovery and stamina, all because of increasing testosterone levels, which are then maximising gains from endurance rides.'

You can also boost your T-levels in the kitchen by upping the high-quality fat content of your diet. 'Testosterone is a molecule made up of cholesterol,' says Mangar, 'so include mackerel, nuts and olive oil in your well-balanced diet.'

So sufficient recovery, strength training and healthy fats form the Holy Trinity of increasing testosterone levels. As Armstrong proved, it will certainly improve performance – just keep it natural.

90

THE NUMBER OF MINUTES OF EXERCISE IT TAKES FOR TESTOSTERONE LEVELS TO DROP

T-raising exercises

These bodyweight exercises work the major muscle groups. You should do three sets of each exercise, ideally to exhaustion...

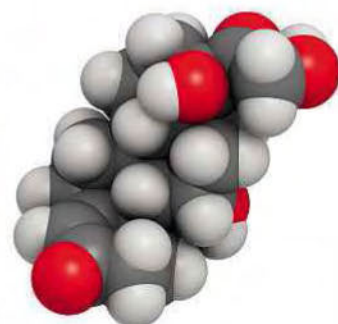


SQUAT THRUSTS

Place your hands shoulder-width apart on the floor. Stretch your legs out behind you. In one movement, bring both legs into a tuck position, bending the knees into the chest. Repeat. You can also do alternate leg squat thrusts.

Not so happy hormones

Some hormones aren't so helpful in the saddle



>CORTISOL

Steroid produced by the adrenal glands of the kidneys. It's released in response to stress, such as heavy training, which increases blood sugar levels so more energy is made readily available for the muscles. Chronically elevated cortisol levels, which can happen with insufficient rest between rides or a heavy life load (work, family etc), can compromise your immune system and up abdominal fat.

>INSULIN

Produced by cells in the pancreas. Vital in fuelling rides because insulin either moves glucose from the blood into cells for energy or stores it as glycogen for use later. Constantly elevated blood-glucose levels – caused if you frequently consume high-sugar foods, for example – can impair the production of insulin, and ultimately lead to type-2 diabetes.

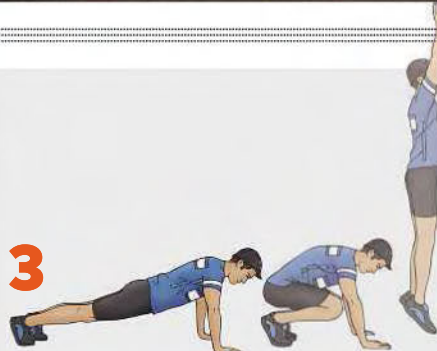
>THYROXINE

Released by your thyroid gland (just under your Adam's apple), thyroid hormones like thyroxine control the rate that every cell and organ turns nutrients into energy. However, according to Dr Will Mangar, it's easy to burn your thyroid out. 'The key is not to overdo high-intensity training and make the right dietary choices,' he says.



2 PULL-UPS

You'll need a bar for this one. Many parks now have them, or you could improvise with a strong branch. With palms facing forward, clamp the bar that's within reach above your head, keeping hands shoulder-width apart. Raise your chin to the bar and lower. Repeat. Palms facing toward you make the exercise easier; arms far apart make it harder.




3 BURPEES

Begin in a squat position with your hands on the ground. Kick your feet back like a squat thrust. Immediately return your feet to the squat position, and jump up, raising your hands to the air. Return to the start position.



4 PRESS-UPS

Assume a face-down position on the floor with feet together and hands palms-down, shoulder-width apart. Raise yourself using your arms, keeping your back straight, then lower down to starting position. 



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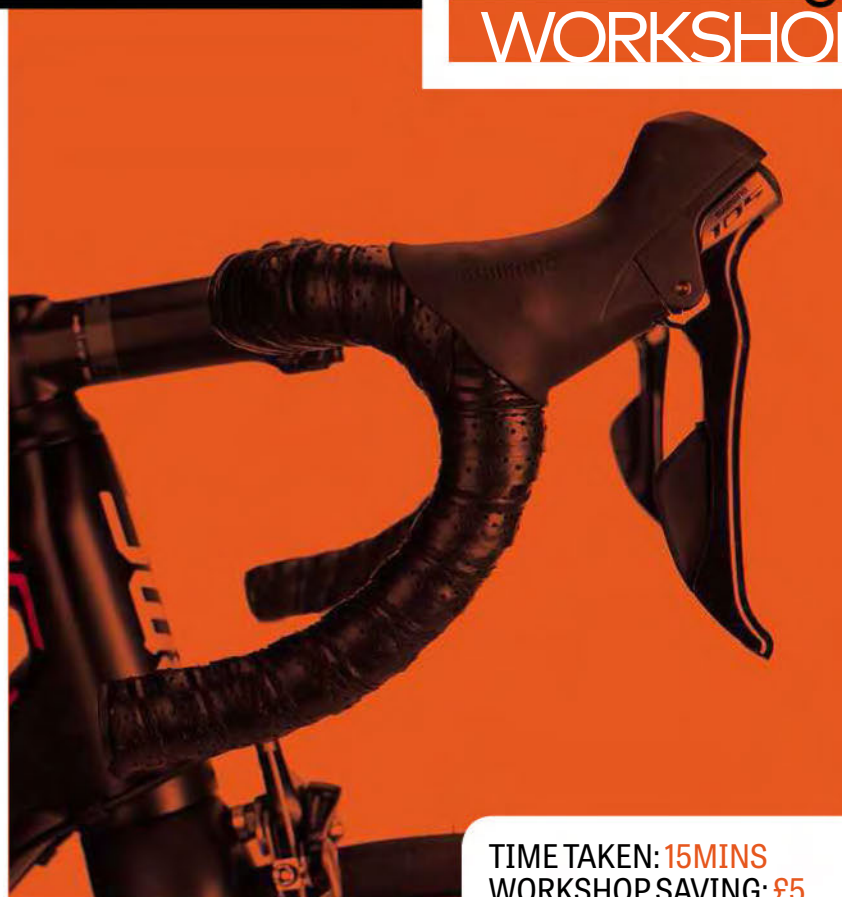
 **brodco.co.uk**

Get a grip

Six simple steps to a perfect position for bars and brakes

Perfect bike set-up requires a level of understanding that only comes from time spent riding. Sadly, the average assembly line worker or the Saturday kid in your local bike shop probably hasn't accumulated the requisite number of miles you'd expect for a person building your new bike – even bikes from the best manufacturers often come with parts fitted slightly askew.

One of our pet peeves is when a test bike arrives with its brake levers pointing at the sky or drooping forlornly downwards. Not only does it look dreadful, it won't do your wrists any favours either. Most riders like their bars in a neutral position, with the brake hoods forming a flat transition to the top of the handlebars. This creates a comfy shelf on which to rest your hands. If your cockpit needs realigning, follow the steps below.



TIME TAKEN: 15MINS
WORKSHOP SAVING: £5



1 BARRED FOR LIFE

There's no point adjusting the brake levers unless the bars are in the right place. Slightly loosen the bolts on the front of the stem and rotate the bars until the lower portion is pointing slightly downwards. Imagine placing a marble inside the end of the bar – it should slowly roll out.



2 LOOSEN UP

Next, roll the rubber cover on the brake hoods forward. This will expose a bolt in the body of the brake lever. Loosening this allows you to move the position of the entire brake lever. There's no need to remove the bolt entirely, just slacken it off enough that the lever position can be adjusted.



3 STRIP BACK

Small adjustments can often be made without removing the bar tape but if you need to drastically alter the position of the levers, you'll have to partially remove the wrap. Starting at the top of the bars near the stem, carefully unwind it until just below the lever, leaving the bottom portion intact.



4 GET IN POSITION

Wiggle the lever into the correct position. It's worth hopping onto the bike to check your hands feels comfortable while you're in the saddle. Aim for a transition between bars and hoods with no dip. The levers should be almost vertical. Once you're happy, tighten the bolt on the lever body.



5 WRAP IT UP

With the lever in the correct position, it's time to re-tape the bars. Take a look at where your hands have left the tape grubby – this will give you a clue as to how it was previously fitted. Try to follow the same pattern as this will look better and help the tape sit flat against the lever.



6 FINISHING TOUCHES

Apply a fresh wrap of electrical tape to the ends of the handlebar tape to stop it unravelling. Roll back the lever hoods. The bars can feel different with the tape back in place but don't forget that further small adjustments can be made without needing to remove the tape again. 

Turbo alternatives

Partner getting tired of that post-turbo session burnt-rubber smell in the lounge? Not all cycle-specific training tools involve two wheels

When we attended a Tinkoff-Saxo training camp in Gran Canaria last December, it was clear that billionaire owner Oleg Tinkoff had spared little for his charges: a salubrious hotel with marble floors, swimming pools and spacious rooms. But on the first night, under the floodlights in the tennis courts, in the arms of star riders Peter Sagan and Alberto Contador, it was something rather more rudimentary that caught the eye: sticks. Lots of long sticks.

While we're not going to suggest you start swinging broom handles around,

training for the bike doesn't have to involve complicated HIIT sessions on your turbo.

'I use very simple tools,' says Tinkoff personal trainer Riccardo Colucci, 'whether that's sticks, elastic bands or simply the floor. The simpler the tool, the more refined the intervention. Complex training equipment takes away from what the human body has to do and ultimately, when training, we want the body to work.'

So put the turbo away – here are four affordable off-the-bike tools that'll strengthen your ride...



KETTLEBELL

There are numerous kettlebell exercises that benefit cycling performance, many involving standing up with the weight held out in front of you and rotating your upper body with your lower body still. The price of a kettlebell varies according to weight – shop around and you could pick one up for around 20 quid.

£22 kettlebellfever.com

RESISTANCE BAND

A resistance band is a simple stretch of rubber and comes in different strengths to suit the level you require. Again, shop around and you'll nab one for less than a kebab. They're great for strengthening your core, and can also be used for stretching upper and lower limbs.

£3.20 thera-bands.co.uk



SWISS BALL

Good for destabilising yourself, just like sitting on a bike. A Swiss ball can be used to make most bodyweight exercises harder as well as add some – such as jack-knives and back extensions – that can help with hip flexor and lower-back issues. Makes a great sound when you bounce it, too.

£24 physioroom.com



SKIPPING ROPE

Mark Ronson's Glastonbury set may have reintroduced jump rope to the festival masses, but it's not only good for creating an old-school NYC vibe. As a tool for cross-training, it can't be beaten, particularly for cycling – it creates explosive strength in the legs, improves endurance and increases core stability. Not bad for jumping up and down over a bit of rope.

£5 decathlon.co.uk



Right first time

Nine top tips for newbie sportive success

This summer will see more UK riders take on sportives than ever before, including thousands of first-timers. Despite hours of training and preparation, many will see this new experience as rather daunting, which is why we've put together this nine-point plan to entering – and enjoying – your first foray into endurance riding. It also works as a checklist for the more experienced (and forgetful) sportive riders.

1 KNOW THE COURSE

'Make sure you've recced the course beforehand,' says cycling coach Pav Bryan. 'Ideally this would be in person but often that's not practical. All is not lost, though, as race organisers usually supply detailed course maps, which you can elaborate on by using a mapping tool such as Google Maps.'

2 DO THE GROUP THING

'Practise riding in a group during training, whether this is with mates or a club,' says Gillian Daly of Human Race Events, which runs many of the biggest sportives on the cycling calendar, including L'Étape London. 'It'll give you confidence when riding close to other cyclists on the big day.'

3 TEST YOUR RIDE

'Go for a spin on the bike you're intending to ride on the sportive at the beginning of race week,' says *BikesEtc* reader and sportive enthusiast Tim Jackson. 'This will give you time to sort out any mechanical issues. My partner's cousin spent the entire London to Brighton sportive in the small chainring because his shifter broke. His cadence was rather spectacular.'

4 BAG CHECK

'Pack your bag a couple of days before the race,' says Bryan. 'And if you're staying away, have one bag for sportive gear and one for leisure. In your sportive bag, make sure you've ticked off helmet, bike shoes, cycle clothing, accessories such as sunglasses, gloves, towel and socks, and your race nutrition.'

5 PLAN YOUR OUTFIT

'It's common sense, but look at the weather forecast and dress appropriately,' says Jackson, 'particularly if you're starting early when it may be cooler. However, don't overdress – a very thin rain jacket comes in handy as it'll deflect light rain and scrunches up nice and small into your rear pocket when not in use.'



6 TWOTIMESTABLE

'There's a lot to think about on race morning,' says Bryan. 'Getting up, getting dressed, eating, getting to the race, registering, warming up – the list goes on. You need to give yourself more than enough time so you're not panicking about missing the start. If you can, set two alarm clocks rather than just one. It may sound over the top, but you'd be surprised how much peace of mind it gives you.'

7 THE LAST SUPPER

'Keep it simple the night before the race,' says Jackson. 'You may fancy chicken jalfrezi but take it from me, it'll only end in a gastro-intestinal disaster. Something like pasta with a basic tomato sauce is packed with carbs and is easy on the stomach. And on the day of the race, eat breakfast a couple of hours before the start so it's fully digested by the time the big ride gets underway.'

8 KNOW YOUR LIMITATIONS

'As the old saying goes, "To finish first, first you have to finish," says Jackson. 'Don't set out at world-record pace only to tire quickly. Most sportives are purposely long – in other words, they're a challenge. Have an idea of what pace you can maintain and, though it may be hard mentally, perhaps aim for negative splits, so you're faster over the second half of the ride than the first.'

9 FIND YOUR PERSONAL BEST

'Sportive courses are not designed for racing,' says Daly. 'Rather they're a great way to challenge yourself and find out where you are as a rider. You can judge your progress by recording your efforts with a ride logging app such as Strava or on a bike computer and use that data to motivate your development – don't feel the need to chase down everyone in front of you.'

Newbie errors

Three hurdles that can be easily leapt over with a bit of planning...

1

DON'T... BONK

Sportives usually have feed stations packed with energy gels, bars, flapjacks and bananas, so you won't run out of energy. Aim for 50-60g carbs an hour; have two bottle cages on your bike and check the profile so you feed correctly. For instance, if a stiff climb is coming up, have a gel rather than an energy bar.

2

DON'T... WEAR COTTON

'Cotton is rotten' is an oft-used phrase but one you'll be agreeing with 50 miles in to a 30°C sportive. Cotton becomes saturated with sweat quickly and feels heavy against your skin. Polyester tops are designed to wick moisture from your body, keeping you much more comfortable.

3

DON'T... TRY ANYTHING NEW

In a moment of fearing they're not strong enough to do the sportive, many beginners whip out the credit card for 'advanced' gels, new shoes... even a new bike. That's all very well if you've tested your recent acquisition in training; but not if you're testing it out for the first time on race day.

OLD
SCHOOL
#1



Use your loaf

Coach Ian Goodhew gives us some pre-marginal gains training advice. This month: post-race nutrition

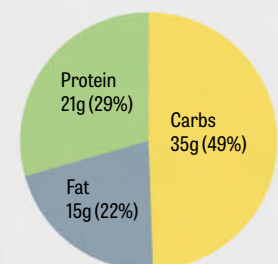
Everyone knows it's a good idea to have something as soon as you get off the bike after a hard training session or long ride, such as a sportive. It doesn't have to be a fluorescent sports drink that's packed full of sugar and powdered whey protein. What do you think your stomach would rather have in it after hours of being fed bananas and gels? Another synthetic product? No thanks! I always give the teams I coach a cheese and Marmite sandwich and they love it.

For the exercise you've just done, it really is the complete nutritional package. You need both carbs and protein to help replenish glycogen and start muscle repair, and a cheese and Marmite sandwich has plenty – 35g of carbs and nearly 21g of protein, almost as much as a commercial 2:1 sports drink. Don't get me wrong, there are some fantastic products around that work extremely well but if you've just ridden 100 miles, you're going to want real food, not powders. Plus you've probably burnt 3,000 or so calories, so the 360 or so in this sandwich will start replacing that.

One thing I've found is that there's a real psychological boost when you give riders food they like – if it's been a cold and wet session and you've got a big old sarnie to look forward to, you've started your post-ride recovery right there.

Ian Goodhew, ABC senior coach and consultant coach to Andy Cook Cycling (andycookcycling.com)

NUTRITIONAL INFO



Calories: 360kcal

GI go!

Grasp the GI principles to boost your performance

The glycaemic index (GI) describes how quickly food is digested and absorbed into the bloodstream, according to Karen Reid, head nutritionist at Performance Food. 'Each food has a value out of 100 and the lower the rating, the slower the carbohydrate in the food is broken down and made available as energy.'

Top of the heap is glucose at 100, while a starchy food like sweet potato registers 46. The sugar trickles into your bloodstream rather than gatecrashes it, which means you'll have energy for longer, exercising or not. Most modern nutritional thinking suggests low GI is the way to go in your day-to-day. But what about when you're halfway through a sportive?

The body's glycogen supply (how the body stores glucose, primarily in the muscles and liver) is generally around 300g. When you're racing at a reasonably high intensity, your body starts to burn more glycogen for fuel than fat. The harder you ride, the more you rely on glycogen. But with limited stores, you could be empty within 90 minutes.

'This is where high-GI foods like energy gels come in handy,' explains Reid. 'They're packed with simple sugars like glucose or fructose. Natural foods like ripe bananas are almost as good.'

While elite cyclists are known to consume up to 90g of high-GI foods an hour, the recreational rider should start much lower, maybe 30-50g, which equates to two gels. Too much, and the finish line might remain a distant dream. 'The gut

95

THE GI OF A FRENCH BAGUETTE. CHOOSE MIXED GRAIN BREAD INSTEAD – IT HAS A GI OF JUST 45

can only absorb a certain amount of sugar,' says Reid, 'so if you overload while exercising, that's when you get sickness and diarrhea.'

MIX AND MATCH

So for slow-release energy, go for low-GI foods; fast-release, high-GI foods? If only it were that simple. 'The GI is based on individual foods but it's very unlikely, for instance, that you'd just eat a round of toast with nothing on it,' says Reid. 'This is what's called composite GI and is

essentially the GI figure when foods are mixed. Let's use baked beans as an example: some say they're bad because the juice is packed with high-GI sugar. But the fibre from the beans slows the absorption of the sugar so you get a sort of intermediary GI value in between.'

Other factors like ripeness of fruit and where the food is grown can also have a marked effect on GI, as can how the food is cooked. Take that sweet potato again. The GI of a 150g sweet potato boiled with its skin on is, as stated earlier, 46. If that same potato is baked for 45mins, however, its GI rating shoots up to 94. That's down to the way starch in sweet potatoes break down.

For the purposes of cycling, though, just remember that low-GI combinations will sustain your long rides while high GI will give a much-needed boost when you're flagging. No longer fear the dreaded 'bonk'.



The perfect race-day menu

Nutritionist Karen Reid prescribes the ideal sportive breakfast

>PORRIDGE WITH BANANA, DRIED FRUIT AND HONEY

Always go for unprocessed oats as they have a really low GI and will sustain you through the early stages of the ride. Heavily processed alternatives like Ready Brek are heavily processed so have a much higher GI. A relatively unripe banana will also have a lower GI, as will the dried fruit. The honey will give you a sharp rise for the start of the race.

>CUP OR TWO OF COFFEE

Caffeine's a great idea before an endurance event because not only does it give you a mental boost, it also stimulates the release of fatty acids. So if you have low-GI food in combination with caffeine, you're encouraging a good mix of fatty acids and carbohydrates, which should help you ride longer and stronger.

>JELLY BABIES

During the ride, energy gels are fine but jelly babies are just as good. You'll have to wash them down with water but they're high GI and provide a sharp hit of sugar. They're also easy to carry and taste great too. You could also try fig rolls – just don't have too many of them.

>BLACKCURRANT SQUASH

A combination of glucose and fructose delivers a good amount of high-GI fuel, and you can get that in blackcurrant juice. Dilute to taste and energy requirements, plus the addition of a pinch of salt will give you a good isotonic sports drink – ie one that is in balance with your body's natural levels of salt and sugar.



'Train low, race high' – stick to a low GI diet most of the time, saving high-GI foods for races or sportives

The numbers game

How GI fluctuates depending on the food



HIGH-GI FOODS

Glucose **100**
White rice
(medium grain) **83**
Jelly beans **80**
Cornflakes **77**
Watermelon **72**



MODERATE-GI FOODS

Weetabix **69**
Soft drink **68**
Microwave porridge **66**
Cake muffins **62**
Boiled potato **56**



LOW-GI FOODS

Brown rice **50**
Boiled carrots **41**
Spaghetti **32**
Pearl barley **22**
Cherries **22**





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OUT THERE

BECAUSE ALL THAT NEW GEAR WON'T RIDE ITSELF

THE ONLY WAY IS UP

Our riders took on one of Britain's toughest feats, but did they tame the Monster?

WHERE: **LLANGADOG, MID WALES**
TOTAL DISTANCE: **195KM**
TOTAL ELEVATION: **4,200M**

With sportive season in full swing around the UK, we were spoilt for choice when looking for a suitable route to test some of the best bikes available right now. We needed a ride with more climbing and descending than anything else in the UK, with everything from super-steep climbs to long drags, and the same of the descents. So we headed to Mid Wales, to the village of Llangadog in the foothills of the Brecon Beacons. Our chosen sportive route was the Monster – claiming to be 'the toughest sportive in the UK', it seemed like a suitable challenge.

The route starts gently, on a flat and easy road out of the village. After 4km, the climbing is already tough, starting immediately up a steep and narrow lane. With 4,200m of climbing overall, there would be plenty to test all the bikes – and our legs.

After that initial killer climb, the route of the Monster rises gradually and the road opens out to moorland with incredible views. Crossing the military training area over Epynt Mountain is the first opportunity to really



The roads of Mid Wales offer a dramatic mix of challenging climbs and long, sweeping descents



THREE LEG-BUSTING SPORTIVES

LA MARMOTTE

- French Alps
- 2 July 2016
- 182km, 5,500m climbing
- sportcommunication.com

Widely regarded as the toughest sportive in the world, up to 7,500 riders flock to Bourg d'Oisans each year to tackle the iconic route, which includes well-known climbs such as the Col du Glandon and Col du Galibier, ending with an ascent up the 23 hairpins of Alpe d'Huez.

GRAN FONDO SPORTFUL DOLOMITI

- Italian Dolomites
- 19 June 2016
- 204km, 5,000m climbing
- gfsportful.it

Probably the toughest event in Italy, with a very Italian feel. Starting and finishing in the beautiful town of Feltre, the event is almost exclusively ridden by Italians. While the climbs might not be as famous as some, the views are incredible and the route as a whole is very memorable.

THE MONSTER

- Wales
- 9 July 2016
- 195km, 4,200m climbing
- acycling.com

If you fancy taking on the Monster route yourself, the next organised event is in July 2016. While the stats can't match the big alpine sportives, it will challenge you like few other events in the UK can.

Our ride took in everything from wide open valleys to idyllic forest scenes (below left) and exposed climbs (below right)



test ourselves downhill, a series of fast, tricky, sweeping bends with tightening apexes making it tough to hold the perfect line.

Gently rolling lanes continue as we reach the spectacular Abergwesyn Pass. The road hugs the side of the steep valley, sheep darting in front and to the side of us as we look down at the river, raging after recent heavy rain.

DANCE WITH THE DEVIL

The road gradually bends around to what seems like a dead end. The steep valley closes ahead but a streak of grey is visible, climbing up through a series of switchbacks. It's an ominous sight, but we all knew this was

coming: the Devil's Staircase, one of the most famous climbs in Wales. We pass the 25% sign and almost instantly the road pitches upwards, leaving us thankful of compact chainsets and wide-spread cassettes.

Descending the other side is just as steep, but much straighter. It's a case of being brave enough to let go, as it's easy to spot any vehicles approaching. The road continues like a rollercoaster, with more steep climbs of Gamallt and Esgair Ffrwd, each with a fast, twisting descent, the final one being the best of the lot.

The longest climb on the whole route is on Strava, and is aptly called the Middle of

WE PASS THE 25% SIGN AND THE ROAD PITCHES UPWARDS



STRAVA SEGMENTS

Try these highlights of the Monster sportive for yourself

DEVIL'S STAIRCASE

■ 1.1km

■ Average 12%

■ strava.com/segments/6670829

Featured as one of the UK's Top 100 climbs, the Devil's Staircase is 25% at its steepest point. It continues for 1.1km and is unrelenting from bottom to top.

PANT-YR-ESGAIR

(Middle of Nowhere)

■ 3.9km

■ Average 7%

■ strava.com/segments/1754218

The longest continuous climb on the route but very scenic. Long, straight sections make it seem harder than it actually is and a few easier parts along the way ease the suffering.

BLACK MOUNTAIN WESTERN APPROACH

■ 1.5km

■ Average 8%

■ strava.com/segments/8491295

Not the longest or toughest, but one of the final climbs on the route. With tired legs, the twisting road seems to go on forever with a constant gradient making it really tough. The views, however, are fantastic.

Not on Strava yet? Sign up for free at strava.com or download the app for iPhone or Android. You can also join our club at strava.com/clubs/BikesEtc and challenge BikesEtc staff and fellow readers.



The climbs (above) are a real test but the rewards come in the shape of thrilling descents down the other side (top)

Nowhere Climb. The quiet, perfectly surfaced but traffic-free road leads us to a high point with views towards the Brecon Beacons.

The road is narrow, but we haven't seen a car or a person in over 10 miles. Someone jokes that supposedly 'closed-road' sportives have more traffic – and they have a point.

As we hit the final third, the wilderness gives way to urban areas, passing through small villages with the occasional shop that could prove useful as stopping points to resupply. With a sense that the end is near, we push on, but the route has a cruel final section. The final 20km feels like the hardest part of the route and with tired legs, it really

hurts. Steep climbs pitch us back on to open moorland where the views are the most incredible of the day so far. Broad valleys give a view of the clifftop Carreg Cennen Castle on our left.

THE END IS NIGH

As we ascend what has to be the final climb on to the Black Mountain, the village of Llangadog and our finish line are visible down the valley. A fast, exciting ride down leaves us all grinning where just a few flat kilometres remain but cruelly, the map directs us left, off the easy road and on to one final sting in the tail. Catching us out, we all scramble for the

inner chainring and grovel upwards. In reality, it's only short, but it feels like the longest climb of the day. But one more climb means one more descent and we push on, flying around the turns, braking hard for the last tricky corner that tightens on us.

Rolling back into Llangadog, we head straight to a pub for the cold pint of Guinness we've been talking about for the last two hours. With the Monster tamed, we look back on the route and our rides for the day. It isn't just an immensely challenging route – it proved to have the most stunning views and incredible roads with mostly smooth surfaces and an amazing lack of traffic. 🚴

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BORDER LINES

Stunning views, quiet roads and big climbs, all just north of the border

WHERE: **THE SCOTTISH BORDERS**


TOTAL DISTANCE: **144KM**

TOTAL ELEVATION: **1,790M**

Think of Scotland and most people picture the craggy mountains of the Highlands. But down in the southern areas, the hills are gently rolling and soft with vegetation. There's a deep-rooted sense of remoteness and distinct lack of traffic that makes it perfect cycling territory. The roads are untroubled by white lines or traffic signs, the villages often comprise no more than half a dozen grey stone houses that flash by in seconds before you're back out into the green of the country.

You'll see fields separated by low dry-stone walls and patches of heather, dense pine forests and hills dropping steeply into lakes below, where you can rest your legs while soaking up the glorious Borders countryside.

Don't relax too much though, as there's plenty of climbing too: the Talla clocks in at 20% at its steepest while the Swire snakes up for 2.5km at an average of 7%.

There are plenty of places to stop, refuel and rest your legs, in particular Rick's Tea Room, just after the turning at Tushielaw. 



Enjoy the rolling terrain and car-free roads of southern Scotland

ACROSS THE BORDERS

Follow *BikesEtc's* wheel tracks around southern Scotland

From Peebles, head west on the A72 for a few kilometres, then turn left on the B712 towards Broughton. Follow this until the junction with the A701, then turn left towards Moffat. In the village of Tweedsmuir, take a left to Talla then continue past the reservoir and on to the steepest climb. Keep going past Megget Reservoir until you hit the junction with the A708. Turn left, then a few clicks later, turn right at the Gordon Arms onto the B709 towards Langholm. Follow the road to Tushielaw, then take a left onto the B711, signposted to Hawick. Keep going until you see a left turn towards Ashkirk. At Ashkirk, take a left to the Woll and continue to a T-junction. Next, follow the signs to Ettrickbridge, then take the next right and tackle the Swire climb up to Yarrow, before turning left on to the A708 back to the crossroads at the Gordon Arms. Turn right and take the B709 and B7062 back to Peebles.



Words: Pete Muir Photography: Juan Trujillo Andrades

SPORTIVE CALENDAR AUGUST

With the sportive diary getting busy, we take our pick of the events that we think you should be doing. Chances are we'll be doing them too

SHROPSHIRE MYND LUDLOW

Date: 2 August

Distance: 84 miles **Price:** £35

Sign up: kilotogo.com

Starting from a new HQ at Ludlow Racecourse, this ride through the stunning Shropshire countryside will be a real feast for the eyes and legs, with views to take your mind off the effort needed to get up the hills on the route, including the infamous Burway ascent of the Long Mynd and the 14-mile climb taking in Kerry Hill.

IRON MOUNTAIN SPORTIF ABERGAVENNY

Date: 8 August

Distance: 100/50 miles, 40 mile women's ride, 20 mile leisure ride

Price: £33/£25/£20/£10

Sign up: abergavennyfestivalofcycling.co.uk

Forming part of the Abergavenny Cycling Festival, the route options available range from longer tougher rides including the Iron Mountain, otherwise known as the Tumble, through to a shorter ride suitable for all the family. With a variety of other events and professional races culminating in the Wales GP, there will be plenty to keep you entertained.

TOUR O' THE BORDERS PEEBLES, SCOTTISH BORDERS

Date: 9 August **Distance:** 74/56 miles

Price: £58 **Sign up:** tourotheborders.com

A fully closed road event, which are now more popular than ever and increasing in number, exploring the countryside of this picturesque area of Scotland, with two route options on a new course for 2015 and timed climbs in a traffic free environment. Locally made goodies will be the feature of the feed stops and pro-style features make this event one to get along to.

ACTION YORK 100 YORK

Date: 16 August

Distance: 102/67/40 miles

Price: £38 (entry plus donation)/
£25 (fundraiser option)

Sign up: action.org.uk

Riding through the Vale of York and the Yorkshire Wolds, plus the magnificent Castle Howard and the Howardian Hills will show you some of the finest cycling areas of Yorkshire, as you are looked after in style throughout the day. The 40-mile route would be ideal for the newcomer, and the other two options for the more advanced. With a proper lunch stop and free massage at the end, it'll be a great day out.

RIDE24 NEWCASTLE TO LONDON NEWCASTLE

Date: 22-23 August

Distance: 300 miles **Price:** £199

Sign up: ride24hr.com

This is one for the truly hardcore rider – 300 miles in just 24 hours! Broken down into seven stages of 40-45 miles with a rest stop at each, you will be fully supported as you navigate from Newcastle all the way into central London on what is billed as a 'flat' route. Certainly a challenge.

CROSSRIDER RUTLAND

Date: 30 August

Distance: 58 miles **Price:** £27

Sign up: itpevents.co.uk

Another growth area in the last few years has been the adventure sportive market, aimed at riders with cyclocross, gravel or mountain bikes, and offering a mix of tarmac and trails. This event in England's smallest county of Rutland includes a combination of off-road tracks, green lanes and bridleways to take you right into the countryside, with the usual support and feed stops you would expect.

PRUDENTIAL RIDELONDON 100 LONDON

Date: 1-2 August

Distance: 100 miles **Price:** £58 via ballot

(charity places also available)

Sign up: prudentialridelondon.co.uk

Fast becoming an icon of the British sportive calendar, the RideLondon event was born as a legacy of the 2012 Olympic Games. The 100-mile main event for amateur riders is run on a ballot system as far more apply to ride than the 25,000 places available allow, but many charities have places available as another option. Starting in central London, the fully closed road route heads into the Surrey countryside before looping back. Followed by the professional squads taking part in both women's and men's races, there is also a hand cycle and Brompton race. On the Saturday preceding the main event there's a FreeCycle event suitable for the family, on a route taking in most of the major London landmarks. And as the name suggests, it's free!



Words: Sean Lacey Photography: Prudential RideLondon 100, Ray Wood Photography



CLIMB OF THE MONTH

WHITE DOWN LANE, DORKING

For the real challenge of the North Downs, take a peek beyond Box Hill...

For sheer out-of-the-saddle, lowest-gear, pained-legged effort, you can't beat White Down Lane. Five kilometres west of Dorking on the A25, the road starts to rise almost immediately, but this is only a warm-up for what's to come.

You'll enjoy a brief downturn, then another slight incline before the railway bridge indicates that the hard yards are about to begin. A sharp, steep left turn and then you're faced with a right hairpin that seems to rise at an impossible angle and is 20% at its steepest. White Down is often featured on many local sportives and due to start locations, mainly being in Dorking, it tends to come towards the end – just what you need after 70+ miles in the saddle.

You won't have time to think about that though, as you'll be too busy negotiating a straight tree-lined slog. You'll pass what looks like a WWII pillbox on your left, which indicates to the seasoned White Down rider that you've got a false summit ahead to ignore as the road turns right into another 50m straight to the top.

If you power on from the climb, you'll end up on the Ranmore Common road. Turning right from there will take you down the titular hill and eventually on to the A24 and Box Hill. That will seem a walk in the park by comparison.



VITAL STATS

Length: 1.9km
Elevation: 112m
Average gradient: 6%
Maximum gradient: 20%



Breathe in the brisk sea air (if you can catch your breath) on the Tour de Mon

RISE ABOVE SPORTIVE CHESTER

Date: 9 August

Distance: 115/75/50 miles **Price:** £35

Sign up: riseabovesportive.com

The official sportive of racing legend Mark Cavendish, with routes designed by the man himself, starting and finishing on closed roads in Chester city centre, then heading out though Cheshire and on into Wales, where the hard work starts. Taking on Panorama and the daunting sounding but scenic World End climbs before tackling the famous Horseshoe Pass. Reservoirs, forests and country parks also feature on what will be a tough but rewarding day no matter which of the three routes you choose. Fully supported, as you would expect, with chip timing, full signage, food stops and mechanical assistance, along with massage and refreshments at the event village in Chester. And, on top of the route the big attraction will be the opportunity to ride with Cav himself. Just don't challenge him to a sprint!



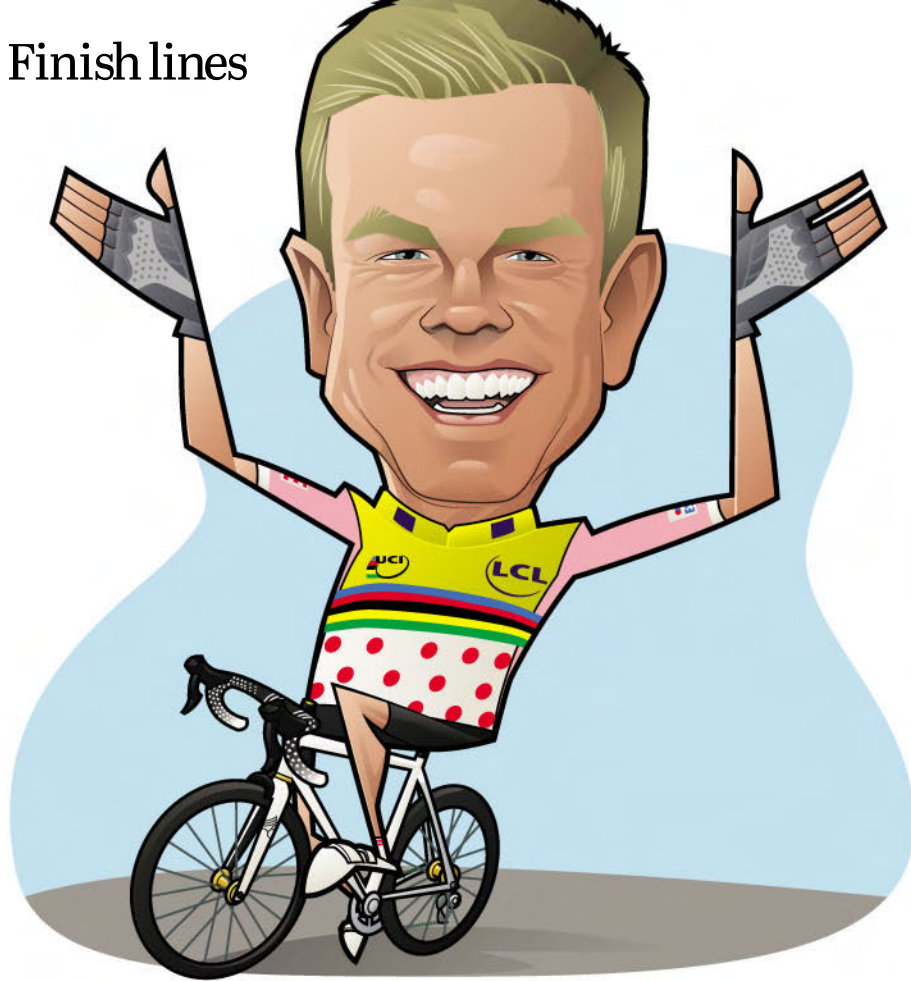
TOUR DE MON ANGLESEY

Date: 23 August

Distance: 103/75/40 miles **Price:** £40/£36/£32

Sign up: tourdemon.co.uk

Starting from Newry beach on the western offshoot of Anglesey, Holy Island, you will be greeted by the sizeable event village set up along the closed seafront road ahead of a day of vastly changing scenery on a circuit of the whole of Anglesey on the long route. There are three main sportive routes on offer, ranging from a relatively easy 40 miles to the full 105 mile challenge. There's also a completely free family ride too (which has its own signed route and a finisher's gift for every rider), which is suitable for all ages. The long route, as mentioned, circles the island, first following the dramatic coastline around the South Stack lighthouse before cutting inland to Valley, home to the RAF's fast jet facility. Make sure you've stocked up on the energy gels before you get to this point as there's a treat in store with the opportunity to take a timed attack on the runway – dubbed the Flying Mile – before lowering the pace back to normal as the route continues southwards through farmland, eventually reaching the impressive Menai bridge, which you make a return crossing over. Following the Menai strait to the pretty town of Beaumaris and one of the feed stops, you'll then head north into the hillier part of the island and on to the northern coastline, then back once more to Holyhead. There is a carnival atmosphere at the finish, with plenty going on to keep the family occupied after their shorter ride and keep you topped up with various catering options.



Multi-coloured bike top

Red and yellow and pink and green, Vuelta, Tour, Giro, Points too; And there is a rainbow, rainbow jersey too



In between stints presenting the news on Channel 5, Matt Barbet indulges in his passion for cycling by heading up ITV4's *The Cycle Show*



Is there any sport aside from cycling where the use of coloured clothing is so significant? The hues adorning riders' jerseys take on great importance in competition, and spots, stripes and logos play their part too.

The yellow jersey is now part of the greater language of sport alongside world cups and championship trophies as signifiers of the upper echelons of performance. The Maillot Jaune (or Mellow Johnny if you say it like a certain Texan used to) is now recognisable to anyone with even the most fleeting relationship with pro cycling. Yellow has to be the colour most synonymous with the world's biggest race, and therefore with cycling itself.

Controversially – and also a tad prematurely – Russian pro team Tinkoff-Saxo dabbled with having the exact same tone dominate their kit, before realising having every rider look like they're leading the Grand Boucle was a bit of a faux pas. The next iteration was more fluoro.

Or chartreuse, if you buy your cycling clothing from rapha.cc. After redefining the look of cycling kit with a muted, monochrome aesthetic, the premium brand's about-turn five years ago resulted in its first high-visibility garments in the chartreuse shade. 'Studies have found that the rods in the retina – the

part of the eye that works best in low light – are particularly receptive to the yellow/green colour,' they said. Fine, as long as you don't team it with shots of the authentic French liqueur that shares its name.

Before the introduction of the fluoro flash, black was the colour most associated with Rapha, and that filtered through to the teams that wear its kit, namely Team Sky and JLT-Condor (until they switched to Mavic this season). Before black became the new, er, black, there was the Maglia Nera.

NONE MORE BLACK

The Black Jersey was awarded to the last-placed rider in the Giro between 1946 and 1951 and incredibly, it was strongly competed. Italian Luigi Malabrocca was a past-master at hiding in barns and bars to eke out his time, while none other than Giovanni Pinarello won the last one, decades before the bikes bearing his name would be ridden to Grand Tour victories by the likes of Indurain, Wiggins and Froome.

Black also extends to the bikes themselves and it's the ubiquity of all-black frames – or 'murdered out' as some say – that prompted me to add a bit of shiny bling to my own carbon steed, earning me the nickname 'Goldenhubs' from my riding buddies.

Using gold is daring, maybe even foolhardy, I know. No one is going to argue with Sir Wiggo wearing a gold helmet and shoes as he takes the Hour record, nor Spanish pro Samuel Sánchez, who still adorns himself in it, even though he won the Olympic Road Race way back in 2008.

Back to the jerseys, and red polka dots signify the King of the Mountains in the Tour (also won by the aforementioned Sánchez) although the eye-catching design is the subject of conjecture. Either it came from a chocolate brand called Poulain, who sponsored the first KOM jersey in the 1970s and had it mimic a chocolate bar wrapper, or TdF organiser at the time Félix Lévitan was inspired by polka-dot jerseys he had seen at the Velodrome d'Hiver in Paris when he was younger.

Over in Spain, the red jersey, or Maillot Rojo, is reserved for the winner of the Vuelta. Stripes, though, are really for different types of victors. National champions tend to have them across their

chest in the shades of their own federation, while it's the rainbow of blue, red, black, yellow and green that belongs to the World Champion.

Although the blue of Etixx-QuickStep is now his colour of choice, when Mark Cavendish became the first Briton since Tommy Simpson in 1965 to win the Rainbow Jersey, he wisely stopped the pristine white background at his waist and sported

more traditional black shorts.

Sure, if you're World Champion, you can do what you like, but white bibs take some pulling off, if you get my meaning. No cycling civilian should really venture into that territory. Even so, they're not the most horrifying hue to adorn the lower portions of riders. That would be brown – fine for the legs, diabolical for the shorts. So, pity the French pros of AG2R-La Mondiale, who have no choice but to look like their thighs have been painted with Marmite. And thank the stars that you have a rainbow of other colours from which to define your own sartorial cycling style. 🚲

'White bibs take some pulling off. Brown shorts are impossible'

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